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The Canal of San Marco and Santa Maria della Salute.

CHAPTER I

Venetia

From the mouth of the Isonzo the whole region which stretches along the shores of the Adriatic to beyond Rimini, is strewn with marshes and cut up by arms of the sea; a succession of lagoons and islands. History throws no light on the past of this district though we know the names of a few of its vanished cities, such as Spina and Adria. But with the Roman domination, towns sprang up; in the new province called Venetia, there were Aquileia, famous for its wealth; Altino, whose charms were sung by Martial; Concordia Sagittaria, famous for its arrows *(sagittae)*. This prosperity lasted as long as the power of Rome. Then, with the great invasions, ruin spread over the land. First the Germans, then the Scythians and finally the even more redoubtable Huns swept over it (452). Threatened by Attila the inhabitants fled from the towns

The Island of Torcello.

and country districts towards the lagoons. When the storm had passed over, most of the refugees abandoned the lagoons to return to their ravished cities and for more than a century Aquileia remained the capital of Venetia.

But the era of invasions was not yet closed. In 566 the Lombards under Alboin swept down from the northern Alps, settled in the Friuli, established the seat of their Dukes at Cividale (Forum Julii) and gradually extended their domination over the whole of Venetia. The destruction of Opitergium under the reign of Grimoald (667-671) marked the end of Byzantine power. Then the exodus of the population began again, and to escape the ferocity of their new masters, the people settled definitely among the lagoons.

Early chronicles help us to follow this migration. The people of *Aquileia* with Paulinus, their Patriarch, settled between the mouth of the Tagliamento and that of the Isonzo; the lagoons called *caprulanes* were taken possession of by families from *Concordia*, *Opitergium* and *Treviso*.

Aquileia. The Belfry of the Basilica.

Canal in Torcello.

Heraclea was founded between the lagoons of Venice and Grado, by fugitives from *Opitergium, Asolo, Feltre* and the alpine tracts of *Venetia. Equilio* (Jesolo) was founded near Heraclea; the people of *Altino* reassembled at Torcello, Burano and Murano; at *Malamocco* the natives of Padua made their home, while on the coast of Pellestrina, *Chioggia* welcomed Paduans as well as natives of Este.

Thus was the first Venetian confederation formed with Heraclea for capital. In spite of constant internal dissensions, it knew how to guard its independence against the Lombards who dominated the hinterland, and to defend itself against the Slav pirates who infested the Adriatic. It recognized another sovereignty than that of Byzantium, the heir of the Roman Empire. The head of its armed forces *(magister militum)* was under the orders of the Exarch of Ravenna; its civil power was confided to the tribunes of each island. Towards the end of the VIIth century the powerlessness of those magistrates determined a great reform; an Assembly composed of clergy, notables and people was held at Heraclea and with the assent of Byzantium, placed a single head called *Doge (Dux)* at

Ruins of the Cathedral of Equilio (Jesolo).

the head of the Federation. But the new Government, whose seat was transferred from Heraclea to Malamocco, had not come to assure internal peace.

In 754 the Franks in their turn descended on Italy, and twenty years later Charlemagne, having defeated the Lombard, seized a great part of the peninsula. Venetia was again laid waste. Threatened from the sea, the Doge abandoned Malamocco, and the people followed him to the little islands of the Rialto, miserable homes certainly, but protected by the barrier of the lagoon.

It was in these poor islands that the Venetian people settled for good. Such a site might well have been thought uninhabitable, but thanks to the sea, whose cleansing tides swept every day up the most receding and hidden canals, thanks also, to the unremitting toil and constant labour of man, the site was held together, the health of this curious settlement assured. On this bank of mud, covered and uncovered with each tide, in this desolate region, the genius of man, at the price of a titanic struggle with the forces of Nature, caused one of the most marvellous cities in the world to spring up. Here dwelt a famous people, unequalled in the Europe of the Middle Ages, here shone the glory of the Republic of Venice.

Chioggia and the Lagoon.

The Grand Canal and the Rialto Bridge.

CHAPTER II

—

Rialto

It was in the year 810 that the capital of Venetia was definitely established at *Rivoaltus*. That island, or rather that group of islands, sandbanks and promontories, may owe its name either to its relatively high shores, or to the vicinity of the little river Prealtus which runs into the lagoon. Under this name of Rivoaltus which it kept for many years, the new capital was elevated to the rank of *civitas*. Its port was called *San Niccolo di Rialto*, while the name Venetia stood for the whole territory of the Duchy which extended from Grado to Cavarzere. (Caput Aggeris) (1). Vene-

(1) The earliest mention of the name Venecia used to designate the town of Venice, dates from the XIIIth century.

tia stood for the whole basin of the lagoon, closed to the North-West by the mainland and to the south by the Lido and all its islands Torcello, Burano,

XIIIth century Mosaic in St. Mark's.
The Body of St. Mark borne to its shrine.

Murano, Poveglia, Pellestrina, Chioggia and others of less importance.

Having proved the security of the Rialto, the Venetians elected Agnello Partecipazio as Doge in 811. The customs of the people remained those of Heraclea and Malamocco; the Latin tradition survived through the Byzantine tradition. By every detail of their lives the Venetians sought to distinguish themselves from the detested barbarians. The Christian names most in evidence, Giovanni, Pietro, Stefano, Vitale, are Latin, not Teutonic; the laws which regulated family life were Roman laws. Dress (as far as one can judge from the earliest frescoes of San Marco which date from 1100 A. D.) recalls Byzantine modes. In the first arch on the left of the façade of the Basilica, a mosaic, dating probably from the XIIth century, represents the Doge and the Dogaressa entering the

Canal and Island of Torcello.

church accompanied by a procession of dignitaries. The Doge wears a purple tunic and shoes, and a red mitre which became gradually transformed into a sort of Phrygian bonnet or *corno*. The nobles wear richly embroidered robes with girdles, covered by a mantle caught at the neck by a golden clasp. In the left corner, surrounded by a group of Ladies-in-Waiting, we see the Dogaressa. She wears a jewelled crown, a long red cloak hangs from her shoulders, a girdle binds her blue robe. One of the Ladies-in-Waiting is dressed in heavenly blue, a golden diadem rests on her fair hair; another has her head swathed in bands of glowing multicoloured material; the face of a third is framed by a bandeau; a fourth wears on her right shoulder a purple pallium lined with green, shewing

A Shell-fisher.

The Grand Canal looking towards Santa Maria della Salute.

beneath a violet robe with silver ornament. Two children, whom these Ladies lead by the hand, are dressed in graceful little garments of red and blue. All these motionless figures, in the ritual attitudes of Byzantine iconography, are crowded together in front of the Basilica.

A View in Upper Venetia.

But we must leave these splendours to look at the architecture of the city. An absolute contrast surprises us. The town was at first built entirely of wood, the unstable foundation not permitting the use of stone. The first dwellings were low houses supported on rafts or piles, *zatteroni*, with narrow

The Grand Canal and the Rialto Bridge.

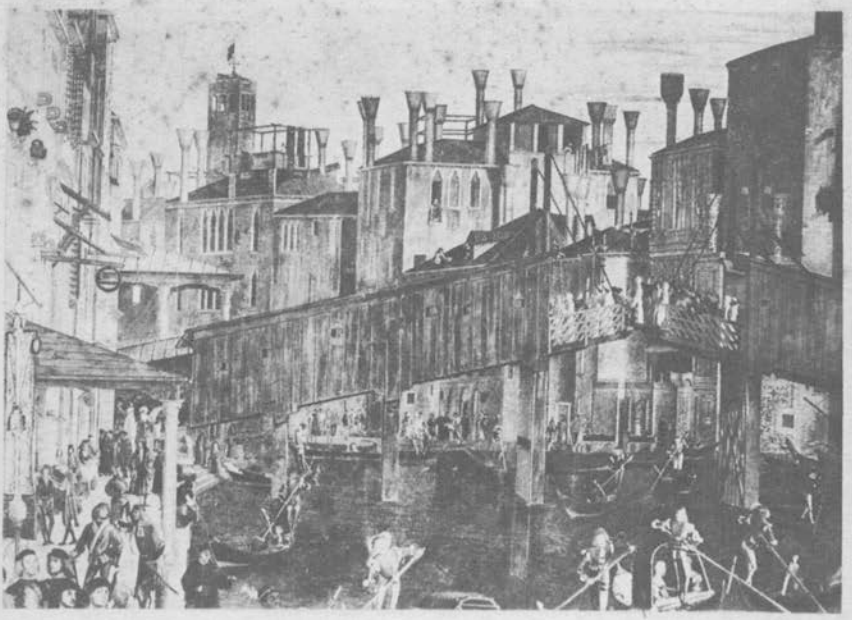
The Grand Canal.

windows protected by iron gratings. One hears of those wooden buildings as late as the xvth century. It was forbidden, for fear of fire, to burn lights on the Rialto after the first hour of the night.

In later times, on the higher islands, on terraces of dried mud strengthened and protected by dykes, the wealthier citizens built houses of stone. They imported marbles, pillars and fragments of pagan buildings from round about, chiefly from Aquileia and Altino. Castello, the seat of the Bishopric, was the religious centre of the new town; the civil government was established at San Marco, while the vigorous and energetic life of the people surged round

The Arch of the Rialto Bridge.

the Rialto. The water-ways were most generally used; boats were built to navigate the great canals as well as to penetrate into the maze of *rivuli*. The little alleys which ran alongside the houses were called *calli*, the quays beside the canals, *fondamenta*. The citizens walked on



The Wooden Rialto Bridge of the XVth century from Carpaccio's picture.

the bare earth; horses went to and fro across the town. Not till the XIIIth century was paving commenced when streets paved with flags or cobbles were called *Salizade* or *Rughe* (French *rue)*. The bridges from one island to the other were of wood, curved and without footpaths. That of the Rialto, built in 1179 was reconstructed in 1225, and again in 1284, but always of wood so that it could be easily restored.

From the labyrinth of canals and alleys, one emerged suddenly on the open, on great expanses of water, bordered by meadows, woods and vineyards. Here salt works and mills were set up between dyke and canal, to benefit by the tides. Between the houses and showing above their roofs, one saw the spars and richly coloured sails of ships which

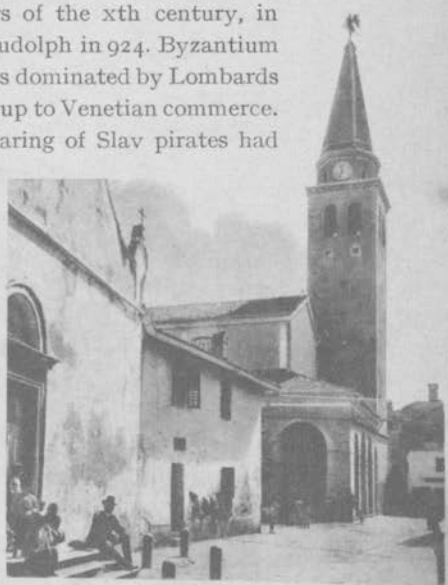
floated on the tranquil mirror of the lagoon, symbolic of that commerce with foreign lands which, from year to year, increased the prosperity of the Republic. In the second half of the XIIth century the town was divided into 6 ports, Castello, San Marco, Cannareggio, San Paolo, Santa Croce and Dorsoduro.

Rio of St. John Lateran.

The chief industries of the Venetians were fishing and salt-works. The products of these two industries, practised on a vast scale, they exported with skill and intelligence. Guided towards unknown destinies by an irresistible instinct of migration, they extended their activities both into the interior of the country by the rivers, and along the coast of the Adriatic, gradually extending the voyages of their ships till they

St. Mark's. Façade.

reached the rich and opulent city of Constantinople. The development of commerce soon led to the increased use of money. The Venetian *Zecca* was struck from the first years of the xth century, in virtue of a right sanctioned by King Rudolph in 924. Byzantium on one hand, the hinterland which was dominated by Lombards and Franks, on the other, were opened up to Venetian commerce. But navigation was dangerous; the daring of Slav pirates had always to be taken into account. Venice engaged in a struggle, marked by varying fortunes, with the corsairs of Narenta and Croatia. But in the May of 1000, Doge Pietro Orseolo, responding to the appeal of the Dalmatians, tired of seeing their shores laid waste, weighed anchor. At the head of a considerable fleet, he defeated the

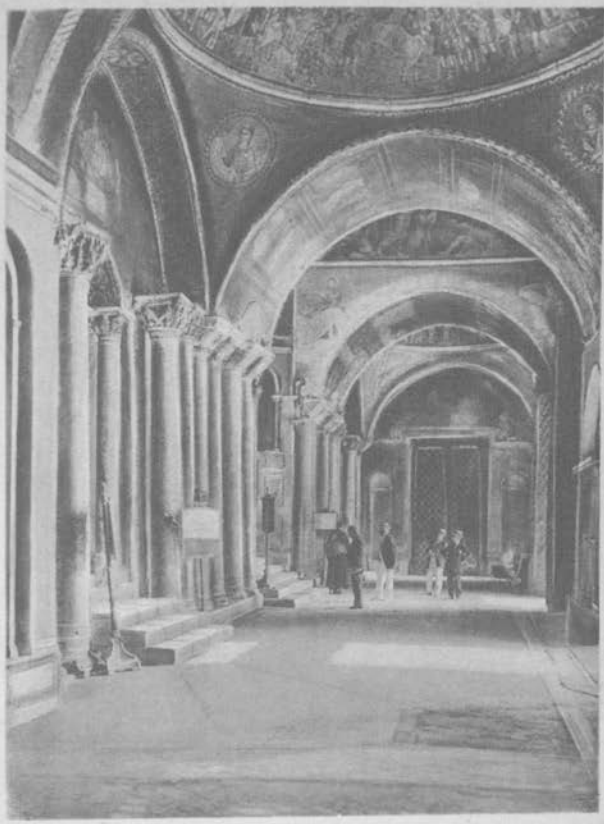


Grado. The Cathedral Belfry.

Slavs and Narentians and was received on the Dalmatian coast as a liberator. On his return to the Rialto he was given the title of Duke of Dalmatia, and Venice thereafter reigned on the Adriatic.

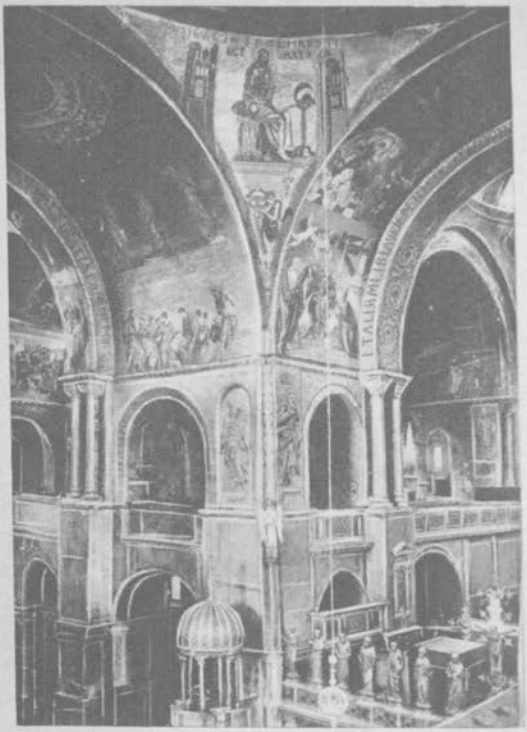
Even though Byzantine suzerainty was theoretical rather than real, the time came when the Venetians would no longer brook their vassalage. An abyss separated Venice from Byzantium. On the one side the young vigorous people of the lagoon, on the other the Greek Empire, ostentatious but decadent. Certain positive advantages, which implied Venetian allegiance to Constantinople, alone prevented the rupture. It broke out first on religious grounds, when Venice, who had hitherto recognized the Greek saint, Theodore, as her protector, gave herself a national Saint. She chose St. Mark, the Evangelist, who according to tradition, had come to preach the faith of Christ at Aquileia. As he passed Rialto, legend tells us that an angel appeared to him and saluted him in these words : *Pax tibi, Marce, Evangelista meus.* And, according again to the Venetian tradition, in what strange manner the relics of the Saint were transported to Rialto! — Two sailors, Buono da

South aspect of St. Mark's.



Atrium of St. Mark's.

Malamocco and Rustico da Torcello, landed in 828 at Alexandria, where the body of St. Mark lay in a Temple. They carried it secretly away and hid it in a hamper under a load of pork, of which the Mussulman has of course, a peculiar horror. Thanks to this ruse, they were able to regain their vessel without being examined by Turkish customs officers, who would not touch the hamper of pork. The sacred relics were welcomed at Rialto with immense rejoicings. In 829, Doge Giovanni built a church to enshrine them. He had at his disposal the numerous artists who had come from Byzantium to Italy and who had already given insular Venice proof of their mastery. The Cathedral of Grado, built between 571 and 586 still shows the remains of fine mosaics and ornamental sculpture, while its forty-two churches were the glory of Equilio. Before the Great War, a Temple was to be seen in that district, dating from the VIIIth century and having three naves terminated by apses. From the VIth century, the islands nearest Rialto — Torcello and Murano — possessed buildings of great beauty. In 820 Greek architects and sculptors, sent by the Emperor Leo, came to Rialto to build the monastery of San Zaccaria. Giovanni Partecipazio

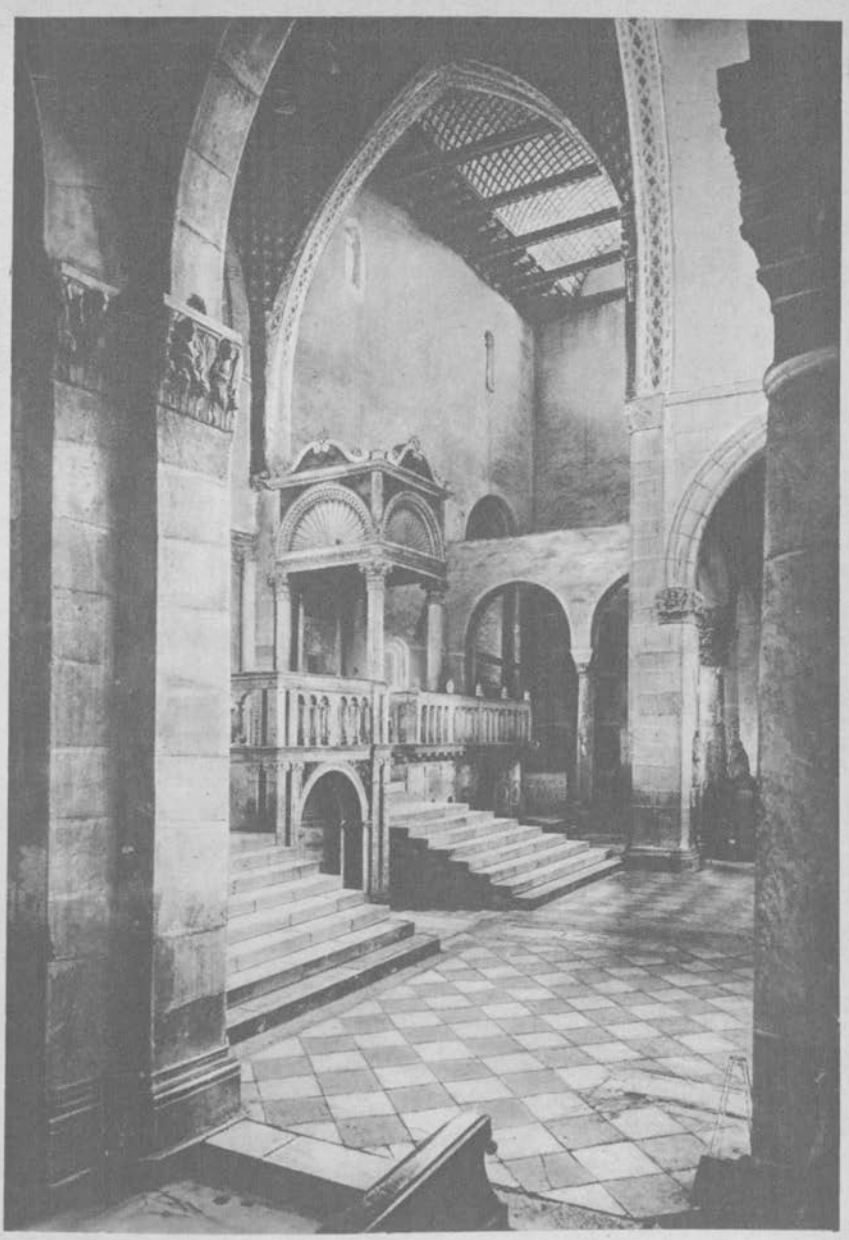


St. Mark's. Central Cupola. Left side.

probably summoned the same artists nine years later to build the church of San Marco. But in 976, a fire caused by the revolt of the people against the Doge Pietro Candiano, destroyed a great part of the building which was restored for the first time in the reign of Pietro Orseolo I (976-978). Its definitive restoration, the work of Doge Domenico Contarini, was not begun till 1063, when the church received the form we know to-day. Soon afterwards (1071) under Domenico Selvo, it was adorned with marbles and mosaics.

At this time the Venetians were nothing but armed traders. Redoubtable in warfare and astute in commerce, they had not yet added the study and practice of the arts to those qualities. Disdainful of the graces of life, the young city in its rough Republican virtue, remained insensible to the charms

Portrait Medals of Giovanna Dandolo Malipiero (by Pietro da Fano) and Marino and Domenico Grimani (by G. Cavino and G. Camelio).



Aquileia. Interior of the Basilica.

of culture, of which it seems to have been singularly void seeing that many great personages, even some of the Doges, did not know how to write : Pietro Tradonico and Tribuno Memmo signed their acts with a *signum manus*.

The Zecca (Mint) and Sansovino Library.

The clergy alone retained — and with difficulty — the tradition of culture. The district to the north of Venice produced many famous prelates; Ceneda was the birth-place of the priest Fortunatus, a celebrated poet who emigrated to France and died as Bishop of Poitiers in 609; the deacon Paolo, historian of the Lombards, came originally from Cividale; the theologian Paulinus of Aquileia, and the priest Teodolfo, were both born in Venetia, the last becoming Bishop of Orleans where he died in 821. The first famous writer of the new Venice was also an ecclesiastic, the deacon Giovanni, chaplain of Pietro Orseolo II. Giovanni was the biographer of this great Doge, as Eginhard was of Charlemagne, though far be it from us to compare Pietro Orseolo with the Emperor of the West. The titanic figure of the legislator and soldier who reconstructed Europe soars far above the Doge who

Portrait Medals. Valerio Beli (self-portrait), Nicolo de Vicenza, Trifone Gabriel and Aldus Manutius.

governed a mediaeval province. Nevertheless, Orseolo, from the narrow sphere of his lagoons, assured the maritime greatness of Venice. And like Charlemagne he had a biographer worthy of him. The Latin of Eginhard already reveals care for style and culture, that of Giovanni, innocent of classical tradition, abounds in dialect. There are frequent errors of grammar, but a simple sincerity animates and lights up the whole work. In spite of the differences of form and the unequal importance of events these two biographies have some subtle affinity, just as the destinies of their heroes had elements of similarity. At the same time at which the Empire was restored in Europe, a great city sprang up from the lagoons of the Adriatic that city named by Deacon Giovanni, *Aurea Venetia*.

Capital in the Doge's Palace.

Ferry on St. Mark's Canal.

General View of Venice.

CHAPTER III

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The Heroic Age of the Republic of Venice

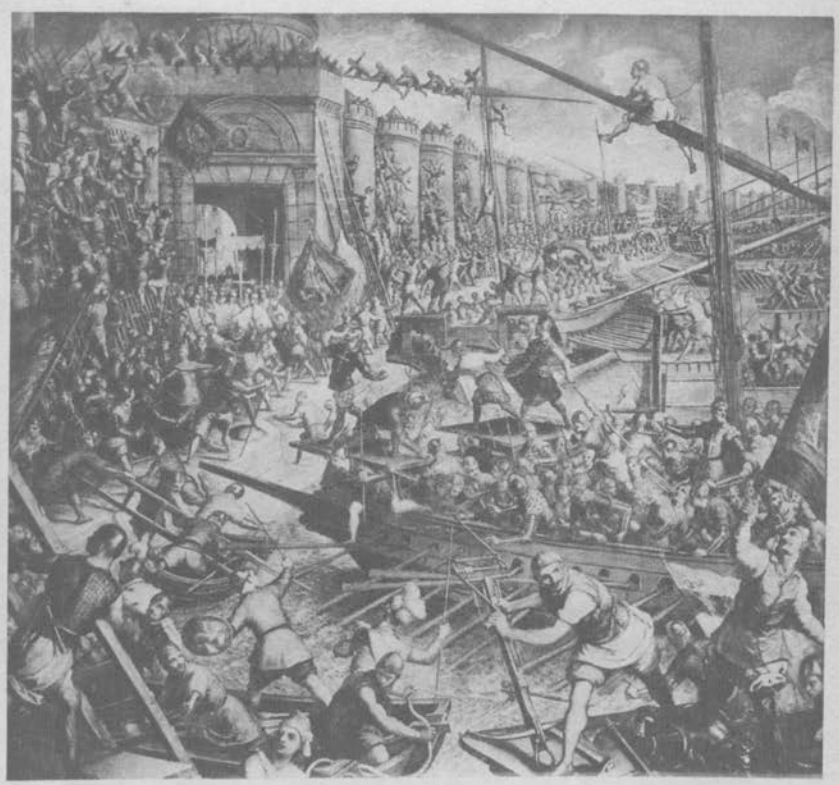
The epic age of the Republic opened about 1000 and endured for nearly four centuries. Emancipated from Byzantine supremacy, suzerain of Dalmatia, mistress of the Adriatic, Venice further augmented her power at the time of the Crusades. Allying her interests with those of the Faith, she favoured enterprises born of mystic enthusiasm and in return obtained territorial concessions and commercial privileges in Palestine, then newly wrested from the Turks. But her great economic and political developement could not of course proceed without awakening the bitter jealousy of other Italian cities. Genoa, the competitor and rival of Venice in the East, became also her most formidable enemy. The Christian Kingdom of Palestine, inaugurated by Godefroy de Bouillon, fell in 1187. Jerusalem having been retaken by the Turks, Pope Inno-

The Two Columns of the Piazzetta.

cent III tried to re-awaken the fervour of Christian powers and his call was heard in France, that land of chivalrous enterprises. From the banks of the Rhine, the plains of Poitou, the Castles of Champagne, eager warriors set forth to the reconquest of the Holy Sepulchre. To obtain a fleet these French crusaders appealed to Venice, who promised her ships for a consideration of 85,000 silver marks. But when the ships were ready, the French barons could not raise the stipulated sum. Doge Andrea Dandolo the octogenarian warrior and diplomatist, proposed to them, that instead of full payment, they should join in reprisals against Zara, then in revolt against the Venetians. The bargain was struck and Zara was soon obliged to capitulate. Following this enterprise, the Franco-Venetian army, on the entreaty of the supporters of the Emperor of the East who had been dethroned by a usurper, set out towards Constantinople. The French, led by Baudoin of Flanders, and the Venetians by Enrico Dandolo, at first restored the rightful Emperor to power, but then, thinking better of it, they turned against him, took possession of Byzantium, elected Baudoin Emperor and divided the Empire (1204). The Venetians, indifferent to the posession of vast provinces in the interior, established themselves on the coasts of the

Adriatic and the Ionian Sea. They maintained their supremacy even after the fall of the ephemeral Empire of the Franks, when Byzantium fell into the hands of a Greek, Michael Paleologus (1261) with whom the Genoese allied themselves by the Treaty of Nymphae.

While Venice thus extended her foreign possessions, her originally democratic government developed towards a more and more complete oligarchy. In the XIIth century the *Maggior Consiglio* was instituted, a body in which all authority was concentrated. The *Consiglio Minore*, charged with the supervision of Ducal administration, was reorganised on a sounder basis. Soon the people ceased to participate in the election of a leader and finally in the XIIIth century, in virtue of a law instituted



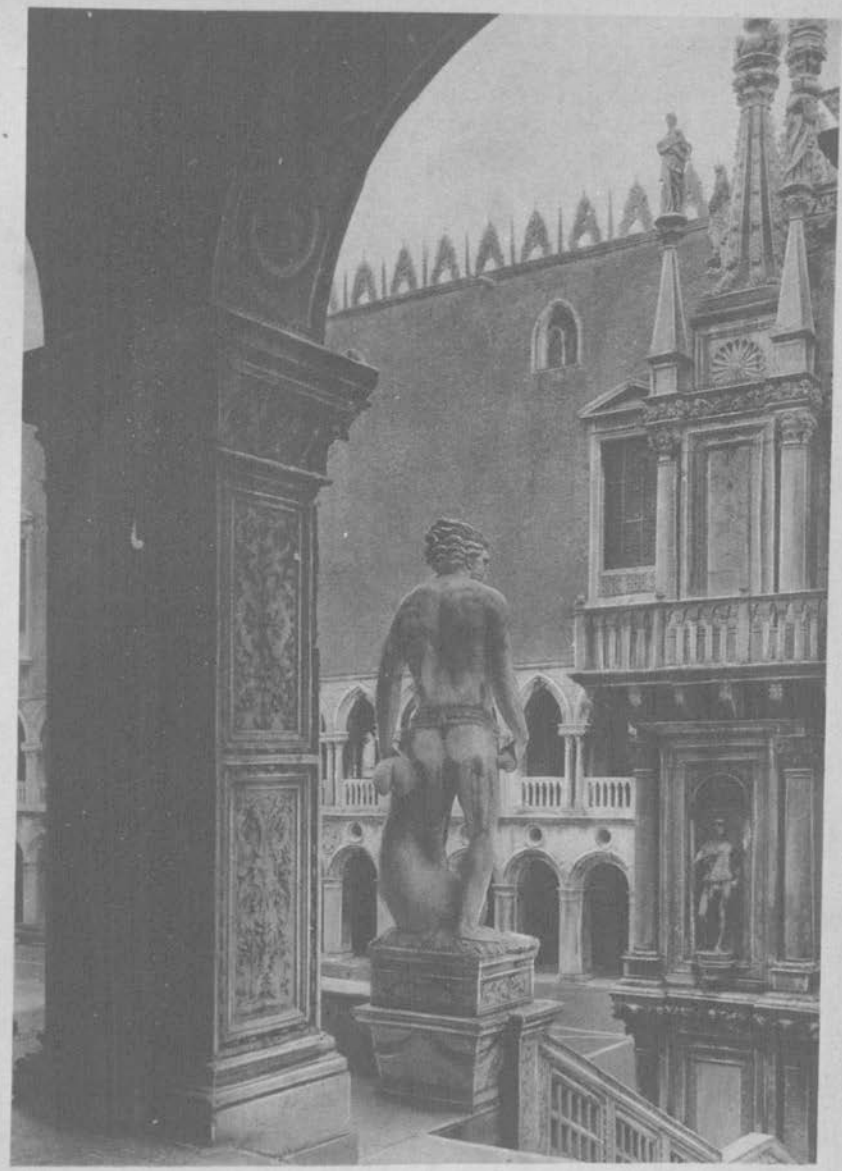
Tintoretto. The Taking of Constantinople (Doges' Palace).

The Piazzetta and St. Mark's Canal.

by Doge Pietro Gradenigo, called the *Closure* of the Grand Council, (1297) the management of the state was entirely given over to the aristocracy. Those who had not been members of the *Maggior Consiglio* during the four preceding years could never be admitted to it in the future. And so the government was protected from competitive or ambitious noblemen as well as from popular caprice; the law of closure saved Venice from tyranny and licence. But after it had reserved its government to a small minority of citizens, conspiracies and revolts were not slow to break out.

The plot of Boemondo Tiepolo is famous.

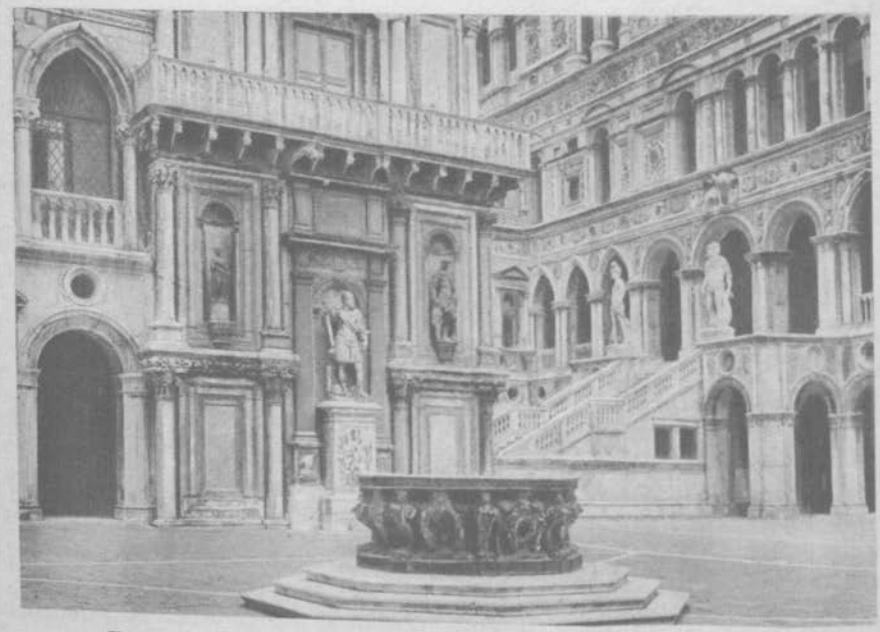
Porphyry Group near the Doges' Palace.



Palace of the Doges. Neptune by Sansovino.

Tiepolo, whose desire that the people should have their rights doing well to conceal his own ambition, took command, on June 15, 1310, of a band of armed rioters. To the cry of *Down with the Doge*, they marched towards the Piazza San Marco, when an old woman, surprised by the unusual noise, looked out of her window and let a bronze mortar fall out of her hands on the head of the standard-bearer of the agitators. The man was knocked down, the flag fell, and the insurgents suddenly losing their assurance, were put to flight by the Doge's Guard, while Tiepolo was condemned to perpetual exile. This revolt led to the institution, as a counter-stroke, of the *Council of Ten*, charged at first with seeking out traitors and defending the sovereignty of the aristocrats, but gradually extending its powers till it became the centre of government.

But in spite of the Council of Ten, the XIVth century saw various other conspiracles of which the most famous was that of Doge Marino Faliero (1354-1355). According to tradition, Faliero, who was already 80 years old, married a young Venetian girl of unusual beauty. One



Palace of the Doges. Courtyard. Well-head by A. Alberghetti (XVIth century).

Palace of the Doges. The Giants' Stairway (late XVth century).

evening when the State apartments were thronged with a brillant gathering, a young patrician of 20 years, Michael Steno (himself destined to occupy the Ducal throne) allowed himself to show too much attention to a certain noble lady and was expelled from the Palace by order of the Doge. Trembling with rage, Steno went out, succeeded in gaining entrance to the Hall of the Maggior Consiglio, and affixed an insulting inscription to the Doge's chair — " Old Marino Faliero ", it read, " is the complaisant husband of a beautiful lady whom he keeps for the benefit of others ". This grave insult to the head of the State cost Steno several days in prison and Faliero, still further insulted by the clemency of the judges, conspired, the better to avenge himself, to change the government. His plot was discovered and on April 17, 1355, his head rolled down the staircase at the top of which it had been crowned. That is why one looks in vain for Marino Faliero among the portraits of Doges which adorn the Hall of the Maggior Consiglio. The place his likeness should occupy is filled by an inscription recalling his crime and his punish-

ment. It may be added that historians doubt that Steno's offence to the Dogaressa could have been the cause of the conspiracy; they see it rather in the ambition of Faliero, who, like the Scaligers of Verona and the Visconti of Milan, had wished to found a seigniory at Venice and endow it with absolute power.

A graver peril than any internal dissension was the growing enmity

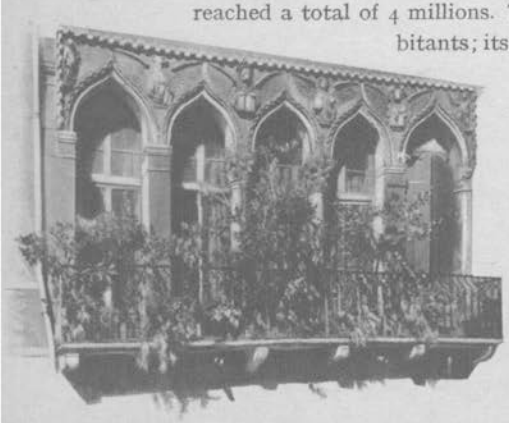
Palace of the Doges. Courtyard.

of the Genoese. There was a constant state of war between the city of St. Mark and that of St. George, alternate victory and reverse. In 1379 the Venetian fleet was defeated in the waters of Pola and its leader, Vittorio Pisani, guilty of not having won the battle as he had so often done before, found himself condemned to six months imprisonment, But the Genoese, following up their victory, seized Chioggia. The Venetians, so nearly threatened, remembered their brave but unfortunate Pisani, rushed to his prison and to the cry of *Vivo Pisani!*, set him free The modest warrior refused this tribute : " No! " he cried, " *Vivo San Marco!* " The same day he resumed command of the fleet and after a

long siege reconquered Chioggia and put the Genoese to flight. But although this struggle for Chioggia slowed down the rate of Venetian progress for a time, the prosperity and power of the Republic afterwards increased till it reached its zenith in the XVth century. From that time its decline commenced.

Rio Mocenigo at San Stae.

The Arsenal, founded in 1104, had already at the beginning of the XIVth century, (when it was mentioned by Dante, Inferno XXI) the imposing form in which we see it in the plan of Venice attributed to Jacopo de' Barbari (1500). The fleet was composed of nearly 3000 ships manned by 36,000 sailors. From East to West the squadrons of the Republic swept the seas. The annual sea-borne traffic brought in an average of 10 millions golden ducats; the profit on export and import reached a total of 4 millions. The city contained 190,000 inhabitants; its house property was valued at 7 millions ducats; the local revenue at half-a million. A thousand noble families had incomes varying from 700 to 4000 ducats. The Zecca struck annually one million pieces of gold, 220,000 pieces and 800,000 half-pieces of silver. The Venetians might justly consider themselves



Balcony of Palazzo at San Stae (beginning of XVth century).

" Masters of the gold of Christianity " as Doge Tomaso Mocenigo declared in a famous speech, said to have been pronounced from his death-bed.

To the blessings of hard work, prosperous commerce and daily increasing wealth, were added those of a wise government which kept a vigilant eye on the social order. The laws were so well drawn up that the course of centuries only submitted them to slight changes. The civil and criminal codes drawn up under Doge Jacopo Tiepolo (1229-1232) held good till the end of the Republic. Wise statesmen, shrewd merchants and already protectors and patrons of the arts, the Venetians were also famous among the hardiest navigators of the end of the Middle Ages. Three Venetians set out on the most daring adventures ever attempted by men of their time, I mean Matteo, Niccolo and Marco Polo, the account of whose travels was bequeathed to us by Marco, son of Niccolo, and translated into French by Rustician of Pisa. Modern criticism has recognized the authenticity of these adventures which, to contemporary readers, appeared fabulous.

Studies related to nautical adventure developed side by side with

Square of St. Mark's. The Procuratie Vecchie (beginning of the XVIth century).

these maritime enterprises. The map of the world by Friar Mauro of the Order of Camaldoli — which represents the universe as known in the middle of the xvth century — bears witness to the accomplishments of the Venetians in geography, map-making and astronomy. This priceless example of mediaeval science may be seen in the Bibliotheca of San Marco.

St. Mark's Library. The Grimani Breviary.

Literary production did not, it is true, rise to such a high level. Venice, whose atmosphere would appear so favourable to the Muses, has produced few poets. Among them one only merits our notice, Bartolomeo Zorzi, patrician, merchant and soldier who lived in the xivth century. His poems are written, not in Venetian dialect, but in Provençal. And Martino da Canale, in his *Chronicle of the Venetians* also used the French language — " more delightful to read and to hear than any other ". As for the valuable Chronicle of Doge Enrico Dandolo, it was written in Latin. No great literary work illustrates the soft Venetian dialect. Does that mean that the Venetians were devoid of culture? A letter, long attributed to Dante, accuses them of " crass ignorance ", but that text has now been proved apocryphal. And in any case we can cite the favourable testimony of Petrarch. That great humanist and poet, acknowledging the hospitality he had received on the lagoon, expressed his desire to bequeath his books to the city which he loved

above all others. His wish could not be realized, but a century later, Venice inherited the library of Cardinal Bessarion which formed the nucleus of the famous *Marciana*.

In the XVIIIth century Gozzi's Fairy Tales and farces were extremely popular with the Venetians. Almost at the same time Goldoni, true child of Venice, undertook the Reform of the Italian Theatre and produced more than fifty comedies.

Finally let us note that in 1267 Martino da Canale in his history of Venice calls it the " pleasantest town, full of beauty and of every good ".

St. Mark's Library. Fra Mauro's Map of the World (XVth century).

Canal of St. Mark and San Giorgio in Isola.

CHAPTER IV

The Decadence and Fall of the Republic

From his death-bed (1423), the Doge Tomaso Mocenigo had exhorted the rulers of the Republic, not to elect Francesco Foscari, a man of ambitions, adventures, wars and conquests, as his successor. While his advice was not followed, many of his gloomy prophecies were fulfilled. No reign was longer or more troublous than that of Foscari. To his numerous political and military troubles were added his own domestic distresses which have become legendary. Tradition tells us that the Foscari family were the victims of private feuds and hatred, that Jacopo son of the Doge, even though innocent of crime, had to endure imprisonment, torture and exile and that finally the Doge was deposed and

The Library of St. Mark. J. Sansovino.

died of a broken heart on the very day on which the bells of San Marco announced the election of his successor. Such is the fable; the truth is very different. Jacopo did not owe his imprisonment to unjust severity Early archives attest that he accepted presents from communes, captains, enemy princes— such as the Duke of Milan — and that worse than all, he entered into an illicit correspondence with the Turks. He died in exile in Candia. His unfortunate father, eighty-four years old and broken down by his griefs, found himself incapable any longer of discharging his functions, and reasons of state overcoming every sentiment of pity, the Council of Ten forced him to resign. His abdication took place on Oct. 24, 1457, and Francesco Foscari left the Doges' Palace to retire to his own magnificent Palace on the Grand Canal. Pasquale Malipiero was elected on Oct. 31 and two days later Foscari died.

While misfortune had visited his hearth, his Republic also had suffered grave reverses. Venice had been forced, in order not to be smothered out of existence by the enemies who surrounded her, to extend

her foreign possessions. But her enterprises on the mainland entailed costly wars at the very moment when grave trouble arose in the East and threatened her continental dominions. The Turks descended on Europe and the Byzantine Empire fell under the sword of Mahomet II (1453). From that time the first symptoms of decadence set in : they fully declared themselves at the end of the century, when the discovery of America and the passage of the Cape of Good Hope opened other routes to European commerce than those over which Venice held undisputed sway. To counterbalance this, Venice tried to become more powerful at home. Her territory in Italy already extended beyond the frontiers of ancient Venetia and spread over a part of Lombardy. But unfortunately for Venice, the jealousy and timidity of Italian and foreign princes, led, in the beginning of the XVIth century, to the formidable League of Cambrai (1504). Part of Europe thus formed a coalition against Venice, which after the defeat of its forces at Ghiaradadda was almost forced to give in. She was only saved by the wise diplomacy of her rulers, men of prudence, knowledge and wide culture. One of the elements of their power was, in fact, to unite with their preoccupation for public affairs, an interest in academic studies. Thanks to them humanism triumphed at Venice.

St. Mark's.
The Piazzetta.

The Mint. J. Sansovino (XVIth century).

Libraries and Academies were founded, scholars, philosophers, historians and chroniclers appeared in great number and the Venetian presses printed between 1469 and 1500, nearly 3000 works.

Though the war against the League of Cambrai left Venice weakened, her prestige was still intact, her empire safeguarded; she even recovered the territories her soldiers had been forced to cede to the enemy. Later on she found occasion to confirm her military power, for we know the large part Venice played in the Christian victory of Lepanto (1571).

Chioggia. The Bridge.

Above all Venice preserved her ancient spirit of independence. She remained jealous of her dignity

Rio di San Barnaba.

to the point of suffering no offence from whatever quarter it might come. Thus it came to pass that this rigidly catholic city offered the most obstinate resistance to the Holy See on various memorable occasions. When the Vatican sought to impose its jurisdiction on the Venetian clergy, the Serene Republic declared that God alone could dictate her laws, not the Pope. Rome launched an interdict; Venice decided that religious ceremonies would continue to be celebrated on her territory. If one can believe the tradition, a priest who did not resign himself to obedience awaited, he said, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Council of Ten let him understand that the Holy Spirit had inspired them to hang all dissenters. The heart and soul of this resistance was the Servite Friar, Paolo Sarpi, who united two great passions in his great heart, love of God in Heaven, love of Venice on earth.

School and Church of St. Rocco.

In her struggle against the Papacy, Venice encountered a new enemy. Spain became an obstacle to the Republic in the extension of her Italian domain. The antagonism of the two powers broke out at the

time of the conspiracy of Bedmar, so-called from the name of the Spanish ambassador at Venice (1671). This plot was discovered and severely put down and from that time, the suspicions of the Council of Ten, which had entirely assumed the reins of government, were fully aroused: state inquisitors watched over the secrets of the Republic.

Venice had now come to a time when fate decreed she should see nations rise up around her, inspired by very different political ideas from those which had made her powerful. But even in her decadence this most ancient of the Republics of Italy knew how to bar the way to Turkey, the enemy of Christianity.

The Canal of the Giudecca. Floating Bridge used for the Feast of the Redeemer.

The long war waged against the Grand Seigneur for possession of Candia was launched with magnificent heroism. When in 1669, after 24 years of incessant warfare, Francesco Morosini, judged that it was beyond human power to prolong resistance, and gave up the island to the Turks, it was nothing but a heap of ruins. And yet a challenge of resurrection sprang up from these very ruins, for Morosini's revenge was the total reconquest of the Peloponesus

in 1684. After the peace of Passarovitz (1718), Venice laid down her arms. But the last days of XVIIIth century were again to see the standard of the Evangelist flutter over the seas, to salute the naval victories of Angelo d'Emo in the Bay of Tunis (1792).

When the French Revolution broke out, the Republic determined to remain neutral and unarmed. And when Bonaparte descended on Italy, the Senate bore the ravages of war and submitted to the affronts of the conqueror with a resignation which betrayed profound exhaustion. Only a few patricians raised their voices to speak of resistance. But the Doge of that time, Ludovic Manin, was a weak man, who only replied to the violence of the young French General, by timid protests; he was afraid — as he confessed — of not being able to sleep quietly in his bed. On Friday, May 12, 1797, the *Maggior Consiglio* met to discuss Bonaparte's proposal concerning the change in the form of government. Out of 537 voters, only twenty opposed this dishonouring sacrifice. That day the Council put an inglorious end to the marvellous history of Venice — a history like a romance, Byron wrote, as the city itself was like a dream.

Santa Maria dei Frari.
(XIVth and XVth centuries).

But truth to tell, if that great marble dream-city still holds

The Prisons. Da Ponte (XVIth century).

its place in the admiration of the whole world, history now better understood, has ceased to be or appear a fiction. Moreover, if a certain literature has thrown a veil of terror and mystery over the city of St. Mark, the Venetians themselves knew nothing of it. No government was less despotic. No people knew such serenity and happiness. The surprising aspect of the city, intersected by its dark little alleys and canals, its picturesque customs, the singularity of its political constitution, — such are the elements which have impressed themselves on the exaggerated imagination of visionary historians and poets. Abductions, homicides, spies, poisonings, assassins, bravos, torturers — a whole terrifying phantasmagoria is inseparable from the Venice of convention. Of what horrible injustices has the government of Venice not been accused, that formidable Council of Ten, whose very name caused one to shudder ! And what can one say of the tribunal of State Inquisitors, who, according to the accepted legend, gave summary judgment on the evidence of anonymous spies? Imagination calls up dark chambers dimly lit by the yellow, flickering light of torches, secret stairs leading down to the prisons of the *Pozzi* — funereal barges disappearing into the

darkness of the canals in which the victims were drowned. Critical historians have reduced these legends to nought. One knows — to take one example from a thousand — that the prisons of the *Pozzi* — less terrible than many modern gaols — were almost entirely abandoned in the XVIIth century. For humanitarian reasons, ordinary law-breakers were separated from political prisoners, for whom the *Piombi*, narrow cells among the leads on the roof of the Doges' Palace, were reserved. A sojourn in the *Piombi* did not dull the gaiety of Giacomo Casanova and, in more civilized times, the Austrian government did not hesitate to imprison Silvio Pellico there, that holy man whose only fault was to have loved his native land.

The Lion's Mouth. Used for secret denunciations.

Doges' Palace. The Loggia of the Piazzetta.

CHAPTER V

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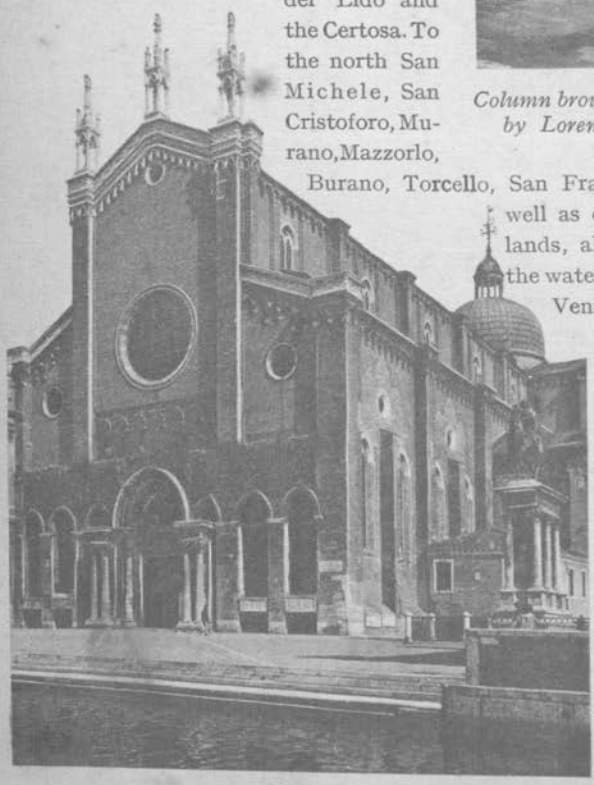
The Transformation of the City : Its Architecture and Sculpture.

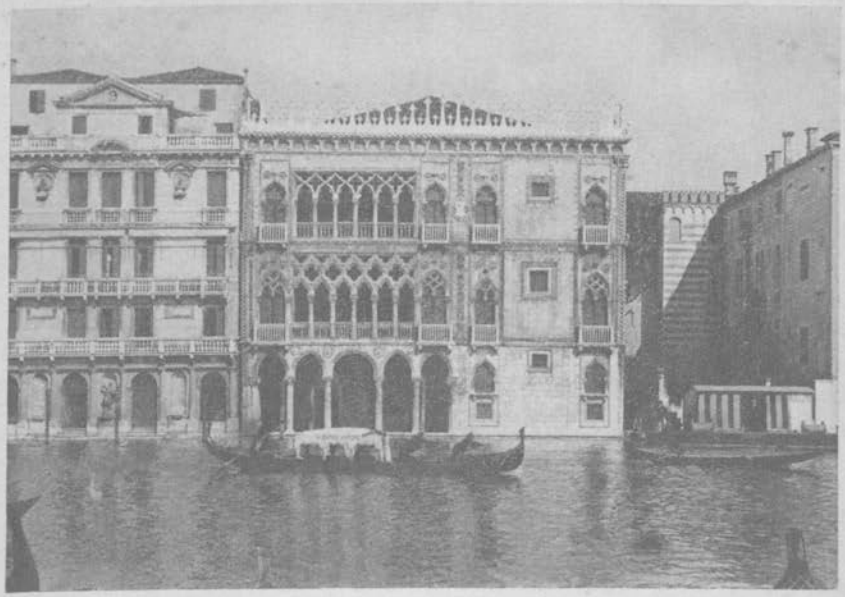
The characteristics of Venice have never been altered. The earliest plans of the city — and one of them goes back to the XIIth century — show it just as it appears to-day, lying broadly speaking in the form of a heart, the apex turned towards the East, divided by the tortuous line of the Grand Canal. The waters which surround it, by limiting its extent, preserved its peculiar character. As the houses became more and more numerous they had to be crowded more and more closely together within narrow bounds. On this plan of 1500 (once attributed to Albrecht Dürer but now accepted as the work of Jacopo de' Barbari) Venice

appears as a forest of roofs, chimneys, campaniles, a labyrinth of streets, canals and bridges. The surrounding islands scattered over the lagoon are also adorned by magnificent buildings, for Venice understood the secret of mirroring her architectural beauties in the waters. To the East of the city lie the islands of San Giorgio, Santa Maria della Grazie, San Servolo, San Clemente, Santa Maria di Nazaretto, Poveglia, Sant' Andrea del' Lido and the Certosa. To the north San Michele, San Cristoforo, Murano, Mazzorlo, Burano, Torcello, San Francesco del Deserto, as well as other desolate little islands, almost washed away by the waters. The lagoon on which Venice lies is protected from the sea by a long line of dunes, the Lido, broken here and there by long arms of the sea which provide natural harbours. There the enclosed waters of the lagoon mingle with the cleansing tides of the open sea. The sea was the vast domain which

Column brought from Acre to Venice by Lorenzo Tiepolo in 1256.



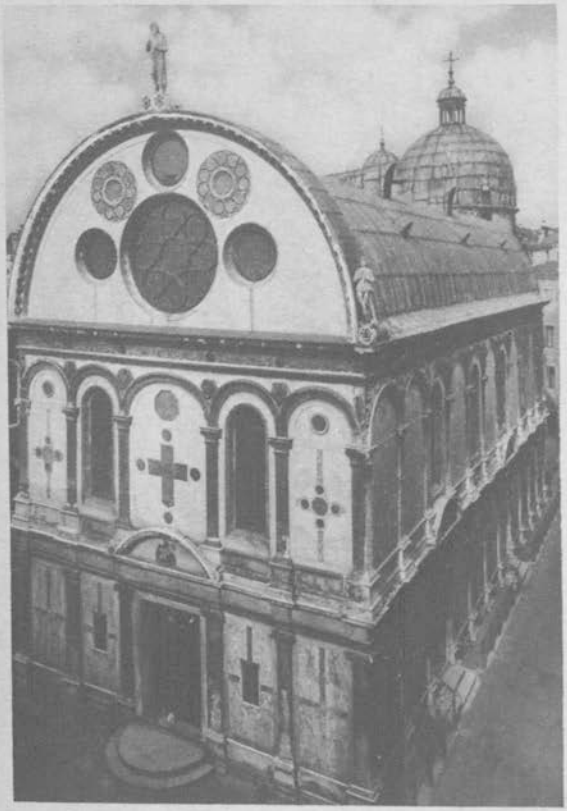
SS. Giovanni e Paolo (XIVth and XVth centuries)



On the Grand Canal. The Ca' d'Oro (XVth century).

Venice made the scene of her exploits, the lagoon was the port where she stored the results of her voyages, the safe retreat in which she added day by day to her opulence and beauty. In the course of time, when social conditions had become favourable to the birth of a wider culture which called for the graces of a more civilized existence, a new art appeared. The hero had done his part by the energy of his will and the power of his sword; the hour of the artist was at hand.

Byzantine and Roman architecture which preserve their true character in Venice, now gave way to new forms; they too were of foreign origin but they became by adaptation, the forms of truly Venetian art. The style wrongly called Gothic had seen the light of day in France and had been brought to Italy by Cistercian monks who built churches and abbeys in the Sabine Hills (XIIth century). But the art of Citeaux was profoundly modified by the national genius of Italy. And at Venice it took on a special character in the course of that glorious period which extended from the beginning of the XIIIth to the middle of



S. Maria dei Miracoli.

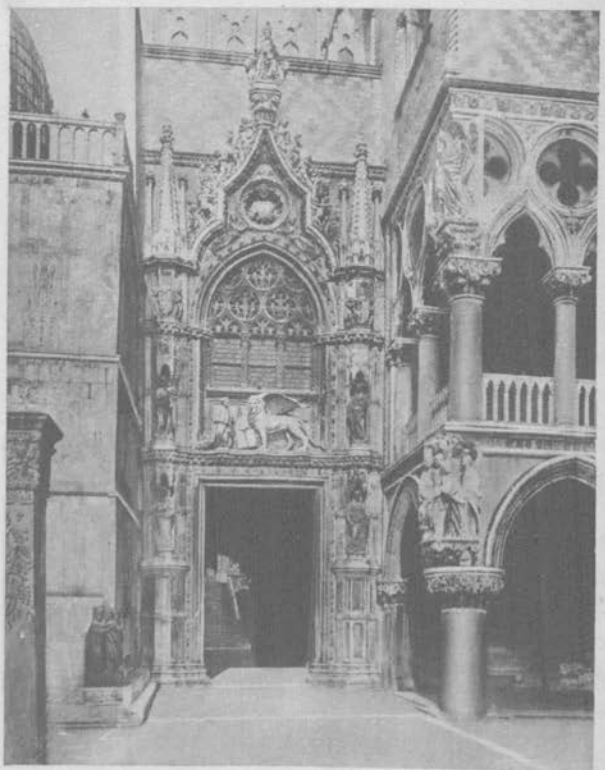
the xvth century.

The pointed style, broken up, clustered, bristling, full of shadow and mystery, surmounted by pinnacles, ornamented by statues and symbolic ornament, became by the shores of the lagoon, light, gracious and smiling. Among religious buildings in this style it suffices to mention the church of the Frari and that of SS. Giovanni e Paolo both built in the xivth century.

But it was in the xvth that Venice really became the kingdom of carved stone, the glory of the compass and the chisel. Many beautiful Palaces were built, though the names of the artists who built them are often unknown, for in the Middle Ages, individuals effaced themselves behind their collective work. But sometimes the individuality of the artist betrays him. That is how two famous Venetian sculptors and architects, Giovanni Buono and his son Bartolomeo, declare themselves in a masterpiece of beauty, the Ca' d'Oro. The façade seems to float between sky and water; the pillars and arches seem to have been put there, not to support, but to ornament the building, so that one asks oneself what miracle supports it. The Patrician Marino Contarini, by a contract signed on April 30, 1430,

confided the construction of this façade to Giovanni Buono; the gilding with which it was enriched explains its name, the House of Gold or Ca' d'Oro.

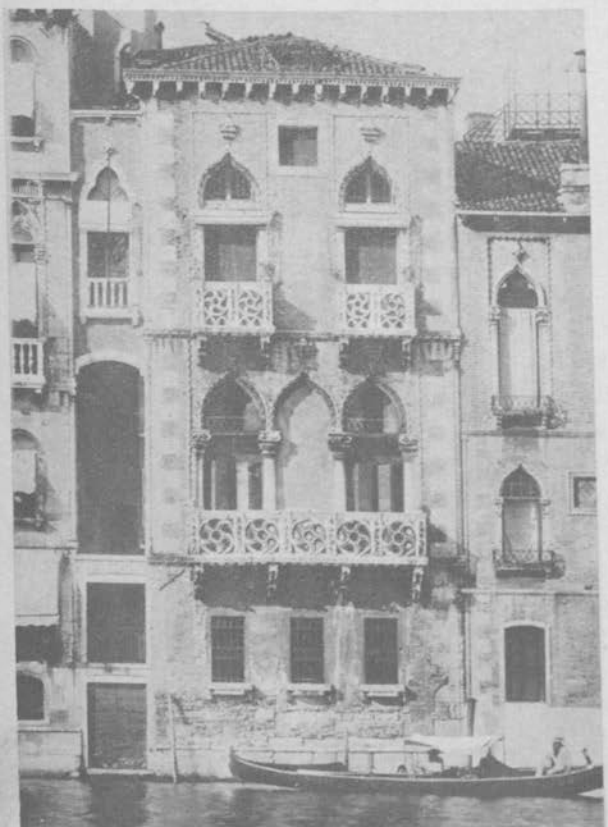
Another gem — and this by an unknown artist — is the Palazzo Contarini-Fasan, situated like the Ca' d'Oro, on the Grand Canal. Legend has woven garlands of poetry and romance round the incomparable beauty of this building. On its balconies with their chiselled arabesques and delicate filagree, imagination evokes the pensive figure of a lovely maiden lost in contemplation of the Heavens and the still waters; no architect ever understood better how to make a setting for female beauty. For this building was the home, legend tells us, of one of the most charming creations poetry has given to the world, that fair patrician who loved until death and whose death has stirred so many hearts throughout the centuries. It was the home of Desdemona. It was here that the Moor related the story of his wandering life and his many sufferings, here that Desdemona out of compassion, gave him her heart, here that she left her sorrowing father, to follow that fatal love which lured her beyond the seas to those far regions where, as an innocent victim, she was to die. But alas! criticism again



Doges' Palace. Porta della Carta (XVth century).

destroys legend! Neither from this house nor from any other in Venice was a young Patrician maiden smitten by love of a Moor, to be afterwards suspected and suffocated. This Palace never knew those impassioned love scenes which led to tragedy. Shakespeare's story has no real truth in it, save the portrayal of human passions. The House of Desdemona offers nothing certain but its beauty, which makes it one of the finest examples of the flamboyant Venetian style.

But the crowning glory of the pointed style is the Doges' Palace, a perfect testimony to the splendours of the Republic. This old Palace — which Villehardouin described in 1202 as "moult riche et biau" — was rebuilt between 1404 and 1424 in the pointed style. Who was the architect? Tradition names Filippo Calendario who was implicated in the conspiracy of the Doge Faliero and hung from the loggia of the Palace he had built. But Calendario was only a stone-cutter who hired out his boats for the transport of materials; he may have helped in this way in the building of the Palace but he was certainly not its architect. Does it not seem more likely that we have here another work of Giovanni Buono (born in 1360) and



Grand Canal. Palazzo Contarini-Fasan. Called the House of Desdemona.

his son Bartolomeo? In any case we can certainly attribute to Bartolomeo Buono, the *Porta della Carta*, earlier known as the Porta d'Oro. Commenced by order of the Doge Francesco Foscari in 1440 and completed in 1443 this entrance is between the corner of the Palace and the side of the Basilica.

At the end of the XVth century, civilisation, modified in its principles, assumed new form. Having definitely broken with the mediaeval tradition, the beauty of early art was again fervently welcomed. In architecture, as in the other arts, pagan forms were restored and it was this reborn classicism which proscribed the flamboyant fantasy of the ogive. But like the pointed style, the classic forms too, took on a peculiar character on the lagoons; they became truly Venetian. Their elegance, not without profusion, knew how to avoid a surfeit of ornamentation as we see from the two interior façades of the Doges' Palace. These façades are the work of that great architect and sculptor, Antonio Rizzo of Verona, and his collaborators. He also built the *Scala dei Giganti* where Sansovino's colossal statues of Mars and Neptune, were afterwards placed. The beautiful clock-tower of the Piazza San Marco was built in 1496 by Mauro Coducci of Bergamo,

Square of St. Mark's. A side of the Procuratie Vecchie.

The Grand Canal. Palazzo Corner Spinelli (late XVth century).

and from 1496 till 1517 two other Bergamese architects, Bartolomeo Buono (not to be confused with the son of Giovanni) and Guglielmo Grigis, built the *Procuratie vecchie.*

At the time when the Renaissance was coming into its own, a family of artists who hailed originally from Corona on the Lake of Lugano, exerted much influence on Venetian art — the Lombard family of the Solari, Pietro who died in 1515, Tullio and Antonio his sons, and Santo the son of Antonio. Among their chief works are the Palazzo Loredano — now called Palazzo Vendramin Calergi — and the church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, which in religious and civil architecture respectively, are the most beautiful examples of the Renaissance style in Venice. The Palace built for the Loredano family passed through many hands and became in 1844 the property of the Duchesse de Berri, thus belonging actually to the House of Bourbon. The home of more than one Prince, it is chiefly famous for the fact that Richard Wagner, died there in February, 1883. The Lombardi imbued their buildings with a character entirely their own; they created a style, known as the *stilo lombardesco* which one recognizes in many Palaces, particularly on

the Grand Canal.

At the same period as the Lombardi, Jacopo Fatti, called Sansovino left the mark of his genius on the city. It is to him we owe the austere and massive *Zecca*, the magnificent *Libreria*, and the *Loggetta* of the Campanile.

The second half of the XVIth century was distinguished by a closer return to the classic Latin form. This period is dominated in Venice by the influence of Vincentino Andrea Palladio, who built among others the churches of San Giorgio Maggiore and the Redentore. The *barocco* style of the following century contrasts strangely with this cold and restrained art. In spite of the epithet by which one disparages it to-day, the barocco style offers us magnificent results and gives an admirably decorative finish to this wonderful city. Can one, for example, imagine the Grand Canal shorn of the imposing and picturesque mass of the *Salute*, built in 1631 by the Venetian Baldassare Longhena. This great church of deep hollows and projections, unexpected and bizarre proportions, lines which are an offence to the laws of the classic School, yet permits an attractive harmony to emanate from its exuberant boldness. This Venetian Barocco style seems to harmonize with the architectural marvels of the Renaissance.

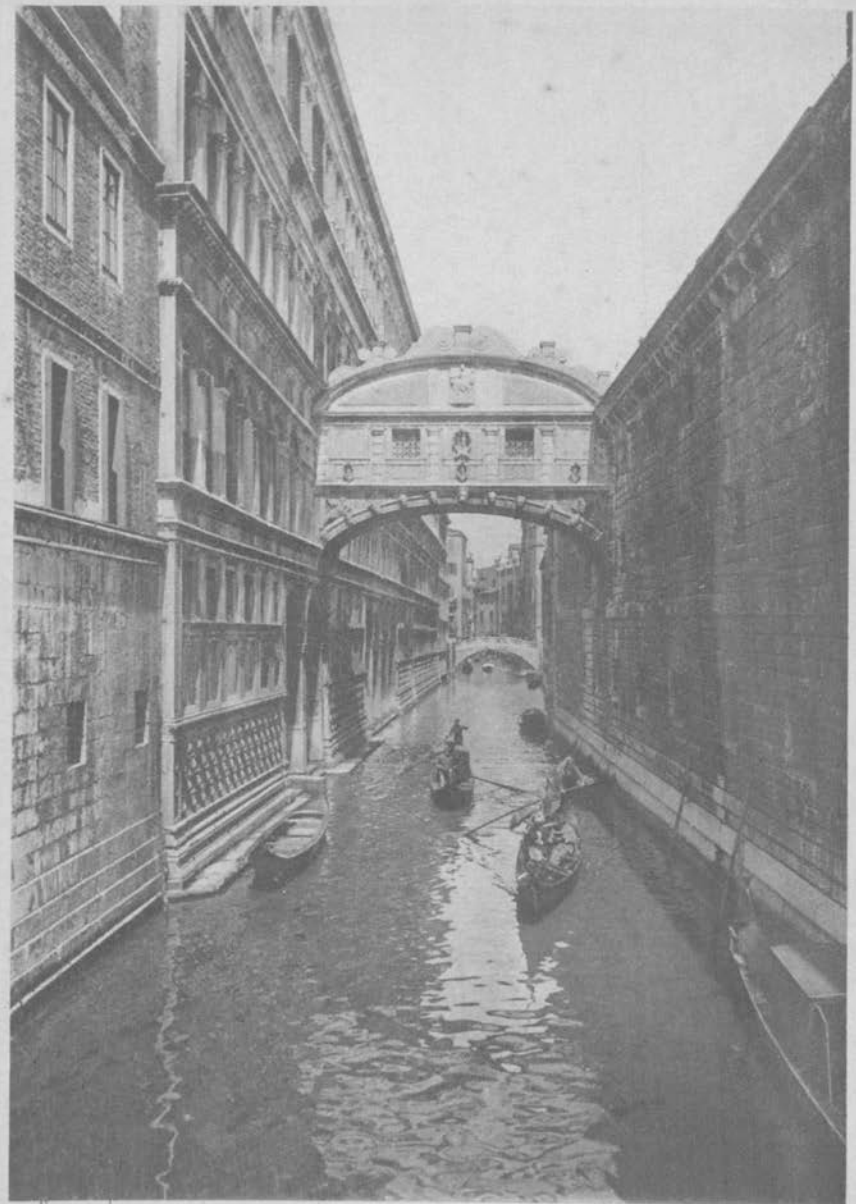
The Clock Tower by M. Coducci (late XVth century).

Mirrored in the mysterious canal behind the Doges' Palace we see

The Grand Canal. Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi (XVIIth century).

the splendid façade built by Antonio Rizzo of Verona and his collaborators. Facing it are the sombre prisons of da Ponte (1589), while between the two buildings a heavy marble bridge spans the canal, yet without producing a discord. Built in the XVIIIth century, it was called, because it was used by prisoners, the Bridge of Sighs. In the same way, on the Grand Canal, almost opposite the graceful Ca' d'Oro of the Middle Ages we find the heavy marble façade of the Palazzo Pesaro decorated with mosaics, bosses, heads of imaginary monsters and heavy, ornament. This Palace is, like

Doges' Palace. The Bronze Well-head in the Courtyard.



The Bridge of Sighs.

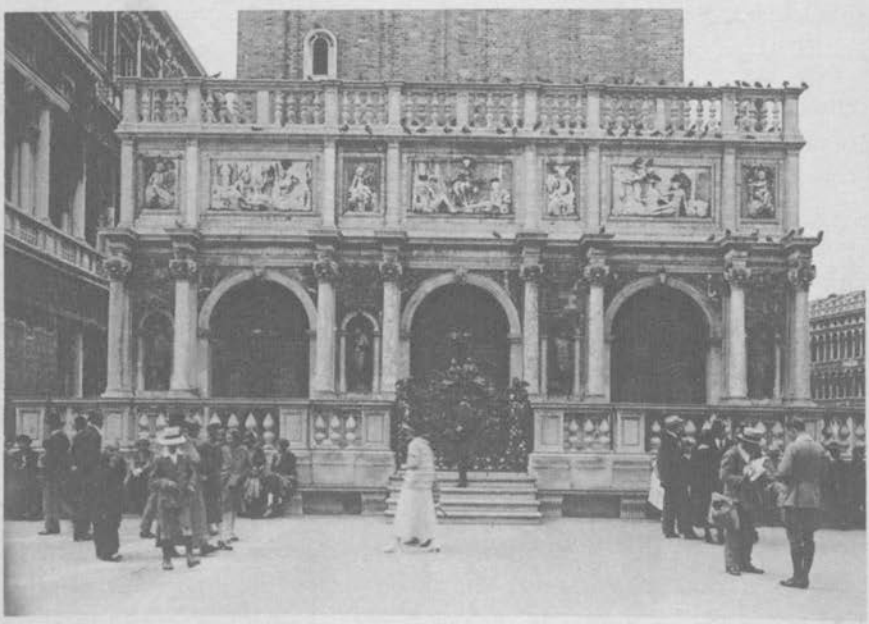
The Mole from the Paglia Bridge.

the Salute, the work of Longhena, an architect gifted with the richest imagination but who, from love of the unusual is sometimes betrayed into mere freakishness, as for instance in the façade of the Ospedaletto and that of the Pesaro monument in the Frari. His extravagances were equalled by Alessandro Tremignon, born near Padua, who built the façade of San Moïse, and by Giuseppe Sardi of Lugano, who was the architect of the façade of Santa Maria del Giglio. But these two men lacked Longhena's inventive power.

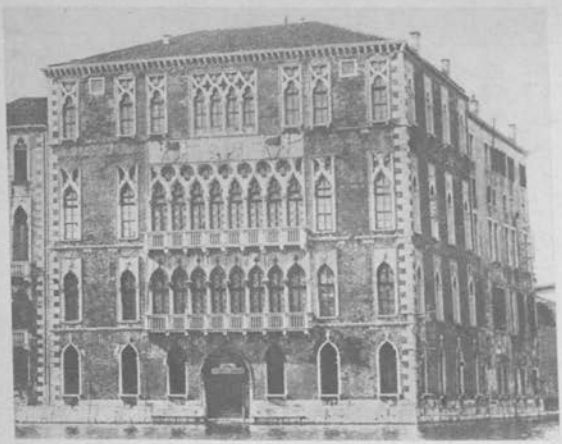
The caprice which ruled such creations, the laboured search after novelty, the strained fantasy, led ultimately to a lassitude which threw Venetian art back on imitation of the classic styles. But unfortunately this was no longer the inspired imitation of the Renaissance; it was, particularly in architecture, the paltry and pedantic imitation of inferior examples. Look, for instance at the academic architecture of the XVIIIth century; facing the station we see the church of San Simone, a miserable caricature of the Pantheon of Rome due to Giovanni Scalfurotti; on the Grand Canal, the Palazzo Grassi, the work of Giorgio Massari; and

the Theatre of the Fenice by Antonio Selva who was also the architect of the Public Gardens. But however much we may reproach them, those cold and symmetrical buildings are better far than the commonplace architecture of to-day, which breaks in cruelly on the harmony of earlier art, for in spite of their unequal merits the earlier buildings preserved a noble and intimate relationship between the different styles.

There is one building, thanks to which we can follow the long history of Venetian architecture from its origin to its decadence, far better than in any treatise, and that building is the Basilica of San Marco. In the early days of the greatness of Venice the church of San Marco served to shelter relics of its motherland, of Aquileia and Altino, as well at treasures brought home from the conquered cities of the East : inscriptions, bas-reliefs, slabs, pillars, statues, precious marbles and other trophies of victory. From the Orient came also in 1172, the two columns of the Piazzetta, while the two marble pilasters which stand outside the Baptistery were taken at Acre when that town was seized from the Genoese in the XIIIth century. The four bronze horses of the façade were brought to



Loggetta of the Campanile by Sansovino (XVIth century).



Grand Canal. The Palazzo Foscari (Ca' Foscari) (XVth century).

Venice after the taking of Constantinople in 1204. After the splendours of Byzantine art, after the rich ornamentation of Roman art, came the Gothic or pointed style. In 1365 the pointed ogive was superimposed on the Byzantine arch. Fifty years later the completed building shewed the multiple beauties of its façade.

A picture by Gentile Bellini shews us the Piazza San Marco in 1496 when we see the Basilica in all its glory. The pinnacles and gargoyles are gilded; Byzantine mosaics shine out below the great arches. The building looks fresh and new as indeed it was at that period, the time of the grandeur and final triumph of Venice. In San Marco we have not only a treatise on many centuries of art, an expression of successive forms of religion but a living representation of the epic history of Venice; in its legend and poetry it stands as the symbol of the Republic.

Here Pope and Emperor — Alexander III and Frederick Barbarossa — came to put an end to their dispute. Here Venetians and Frenchmen — among them Geoffrey de Villehardouin and Enrico Dandolo — knelt in front of the

S. Moïse (XVIIth century).

altar before joining their ships and sailing away to fight. Here, in 1378, under the immanent menace of Genoa, the people took a solemn oath before the Lord that they would die rather than surrender. Here in 1571 Hymns of thankfulness announced the Victory of Lepanto. Here in 1690 Francesco Morosini, victor of the Turks, conqueror of the Peloponesus received a sword blessed by Pope Alexander VIII.

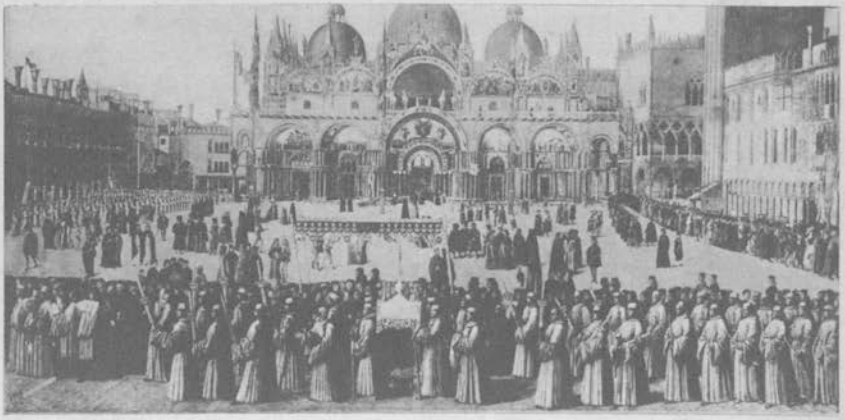
Piazza Giovanni e Paolo. The Colleoni Monument.

And legend is interwoven with history; it is said that the altar-stone of the Baptistery is the same as that at which Christ preached at Tyre and Sidon; a figure of the Madonna is said to be carved on the very rock Moses struck that water might flow in the desert. A French pilgrim, Jehan de Tournay, visiting in 1487 the " richest church he had ever seen ", noticed in the carved figure of the Madonna " the four holes from which the water flowed ". On one of the arches we see the figure of an old man on crutches, gnawing his hands; this is said to be the architect of the Basilica, brokenhearted because his building is not so beautiful as his ideal vision of it. Another legend, of a time nearer our own, is that of the Fornaretto

or little baker. This Fornaretto, falsely accused of murder, was condemned to death and executed. Some time after, the real murderer was discovered and from that time the custom was instituted of saying to a judge on the point of pronouncing sentence of capital punishment, " Remember the Fornaretto! " A further legend affirms that the two lamps which are still lit at sunset before a figure of the Madonna on the side of the Basilica nearest the Piazzetta, burn in expiation of the judge's error in condemning this little baker. The true origin of this lamp is however that the Fabric of San Marco provides the oil burned in it from the income of an ancient legacy made for that purpose.

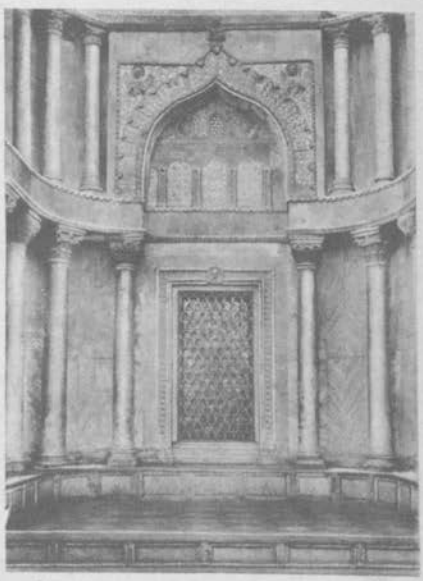
The School of St. Mark, now the Civil Hospital.

But let us leave these traditions, on which the critical historian has no mercy, to contemplate the incomparable magnificence of the Piazza San Marco, of which Napoleon said it was worthy to have the sky for roof. In one corner of it, solitary and impressive, stands the Campanile. Set down there as if at random, it seems of intent to defy the perfect symmetry of a



A Procession in the Square of St. Mark by Gentile Bellini.

whole which nevertheless one cannot imagine without it. According to some historians, the great tower, begun in 911, was completed between 1178 and 1180. The height of the Campanile is 325 feet; a golden angel perched on the summit dominates the horizon. From the bell-chamber one has a wonderful view of the whole of Venice, the islands which surround it as a garland, the lagoon between it and the Alps which fade away in the distance, and the open sea which bounds the Lido. Curved in the form of a great bow, widely opened out towards the East, veiled in the silvery vapours of the sea, floating between the blue heavens and the blue waters — such is Venice. More than four centuries ago, Philippe de Commines, the ambassador of Charles VIII, intoxicated with admiration at this sight exclaimed "Never have I seen a more triumphal city!"



The Basilica of St. Mark. A Door in the Façade.

For here reality surpasses the most extravagant imagination. This city without terra-firma, with no surrounding country, with no visible foundation save its own reflection in the waters, seems to contradict every natural law. There is no other example in the world of a city, which, once possessing plants and animals like every other city, is now totally deprived of them. In the course of the centuries, Venice has had to push vegetation away from her, to proscribe the presence of animals, creating instead, as necessity decreed, a city of stone which could admit nothing but architectural perspectives.

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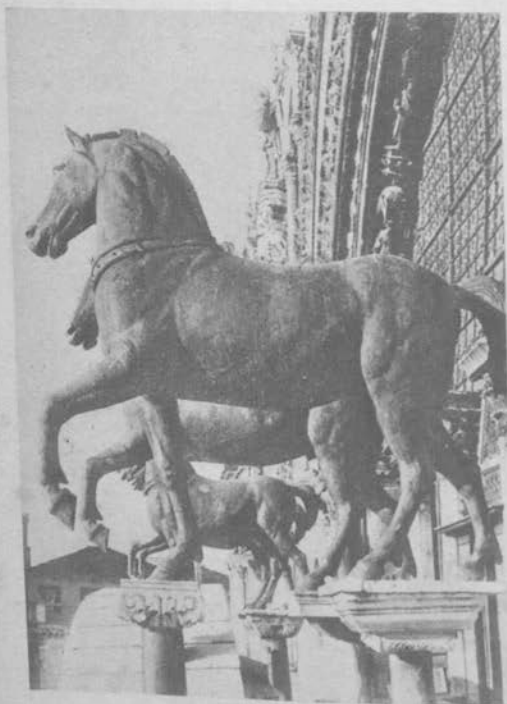
Sculpture

The art of the architect, more closely allied than any other to the necessities of life, always precedes that of the sculptor and painter. At Venice, it not only had the privilege of this priority, it attained such splendour that its beauties almost put sculpture in the second place. For sculpture only appeared at first as an ornament, a detail of the building. But it has some fine works to show us at Venice, such as the flowers with which Byzantine artists ornamented the Basilica of San Marco. In the Roman period, the arch of the chief entrance was enriched by ornamental motifs, remark-



The Four Horses of St. Mark.

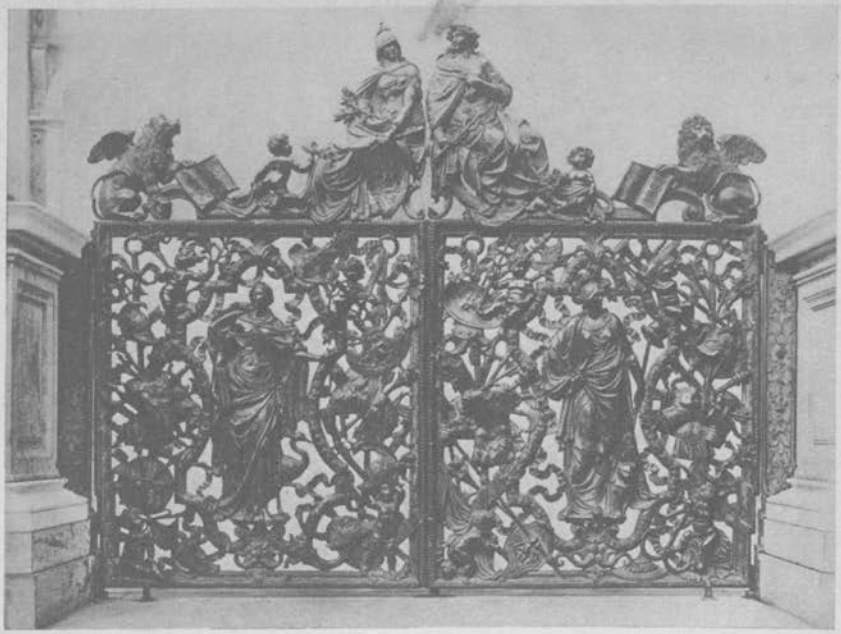
The Basilica and Square of St. Mark.

able for their power of invention. In the XIVth century, the towers, cornices and pinnacles of the Basilica were ornamented with Gothic decoration, but already by that time, sculpture was more than merely decorative; the sculptor's chisel boldly attempted the imitation of the human figure and the niches of San Marco were filled with statues. Soon, thanks to two famous Venetians, the brothers Jacobello and Pietro-Paolo dalle Masegne, Venetian sculpture began to borrow new form and sentiment from the great source of Tuscan Art. The Masegne brothers carved — from blocks of marble, — the figures of the Madonna and Apostles in the Rood-Screen.

To them and their school we owe certain tombs, among others that of Andrea Dandolo at St. Mark's, the Corner and Michael Morosini monuments in the Church of Giovanni e Paolo. It is interesting to notice that at this period the Venetian sculptors employed their talents chiefly in monuments to the dead, in conformation with the spirit of their city, which was proud of its destiny and wished always to honour its great dead.

In the XVth century, the architects Giovanni and Bartolomeo Buono were also famous as sculptors, as the statues of the *Porta della Carta* testify. They were only surpassed by Antonio Rizzo of Verona,

The Grand Canal towards Rialto seen from the Palazzo Foscari.



The Loggetta of Sansovino. Bronze Gates by A. Gai (XVIIIth century).

sculptor of the figures of Adam and Eve, which face the *Scala dei Giganti*, and the Foscari monument in the Frari. Towards the middle of the xvth century appeared another sculptor of great talent, Pietro Solari, better known as Il Lombardo by reason of his origin. Chief of a line of sculptors who continued till the beginning of the xviith century, he worked mostly in conjunction with his sons Tullio and Antonio and with his nephew Martino.

We owe to Pietro Lombardo Dante's tomb at Ravenna, the two altars at the entrance to the choir in St. Mark's, and the monument to Cardinal Zeno, in collaboration with Leopardi, in the same Church.

Martino built the façade of San Zaccaria and the Scuola di San Marco; Antonio the tomb of the Doge Mocenigo, the twelve apostles of S. Giovanni Crisostome, the Church itself being attributed to Moro Lombardo the son of Martino.

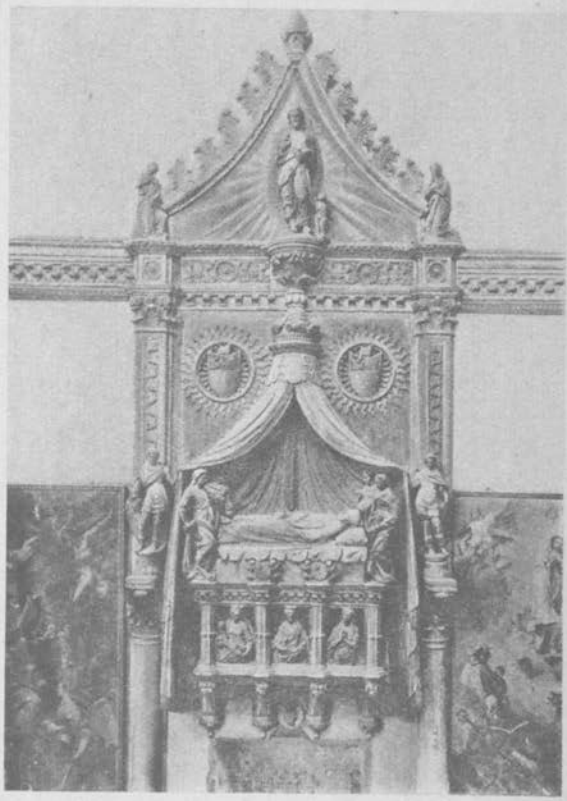
At the end of the xvth century Leopardi, author of the pedestal for Verrocchio's great statue of Colleoni, constructed the tomb of Doge Vendramin.

St. Mark's. Apostles by J. and P. P. dalle Masegne (XIVth century).

Leopardi has been accused of having placed his signature on the Colleoni Statue, but its history is well known. Bartolomeo Colleoni left his fortune to the city whose armies he commanded. He stipulated that a monument to him should be erected in the Piazza; this locality was con-

Courtyard of the Doges' Palace. Adam and Eve by A. Rizzo (XVth century).

sidered too small and the Piazza San Giovanni e Paolo was chosen. The work was entrusted to Verrocchio who began it and stopped it owing to certain quarrels; having settled the disagreement he died just as he had completed his model. The casting was then undertaken by Leopardi who added certain details which explains the signature which he added to a work only completed by him. The moving freshness of the first Renaissance was succeeded by the greatness of Sansovino. Among his best known works are the colossal figures of Mars and Neptune and the statues of the Loggetta at the foot of the Campanile.



The Church of Santa Maria dei Frari. The Tomb of the Doge F. Foscari.

Alessandro Vittoria of Brenta, a sculptor of real power appeared towards the middle of the XVIth century. His bold modelling is to be admired above all in the marvellous stuccos of Sansovino's *Libreria* and in his busts, which are full of life and reality. He had three well-known disciples, Tiziano Aspetti, Girolamo Campagna (sculptors of the two colossal marble figures which adorn the atrium of the *Zecca)* and Girolamo da Ferrara, the sculptor of the bas-reliefs of the *Loggetta* and many less famous works.

Of Venetian sculptors of the XVIIth century, it is better not to

The Church of Santa Maria dei Frari. The Tomb of the Doge Giovanni Pesaro by B. Longhena. Lower Part.

Santa Maria dei Frari. St. Jerome by Alessandro Vittoria (XVIth century).

speak, save to remember that mediocre talent which seeks to imitate the boldness of genius, exposes itself to the danger of violating both taste and feeling. The unbridled virtuosity of the chisel was given free rein in Venice; buildings and tombs were ornamented with figures in epileptic contortions, swollen muscles, billowing robes. The statues by the Saxon Melchior Barthel, in the Pesaro monument built by Longhena in the Frari,

Correr Museum. Daedalus and Icarus by Canova.

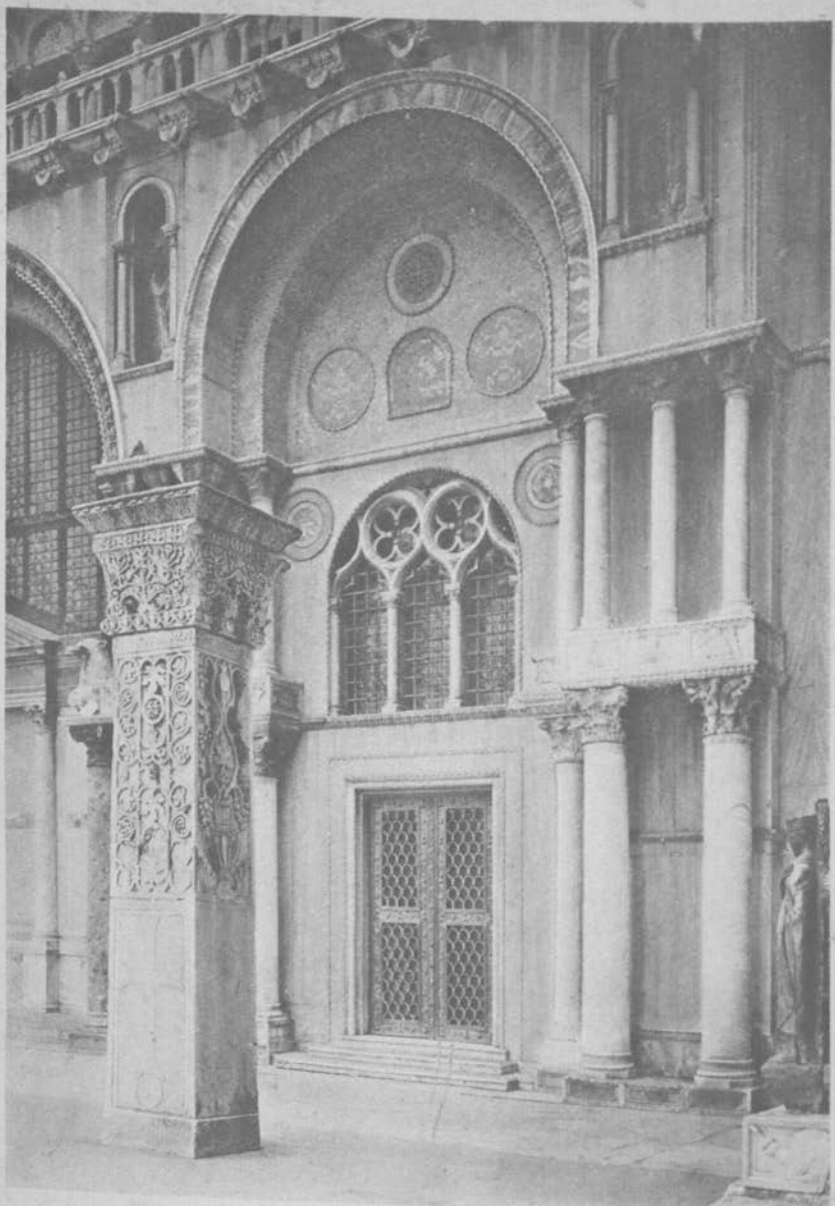
are a sad example of this style.

The XVIIIth century marked a revival in sculpture or at least a return to a more disciplined style. It came to an end in Antonio Canova (born at Possagno in 1757) imitator and heir of the Greeks. Chiefly intent on his ensemble, his work, penetrated by classicism, may seem cold; some of it however has a breath of real life, as for example that admirable work of his youth, Daedalus and Icarus in the *Museo Civico*.

The Doges' Palace. The two statues of Mars and Neptune.

The Colleoni monument by Verrocchio and Leopardi.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY



The Basilica of St. Mark. South side towards the Piazzetta.

J. del Fiore. The Lion of St. Mark.

CHAPTER VI

Painting

Painting expresses the genius of Venice better then sculpture, better even perhaps than architecture. The smiling faces of her pictures reflect her soul; they tell us her secret, they express her lyricism. For though Venice was a kingdom of stone before she became a kingdom of colour, though painting was born last, it also died last. By the end of the XIVth century, painting had only dawned at Venice with the panel paintings of Antonio Veneziano, Lorenzo, Paolo, Caterino, Niccolo Paradisi, Niccolo Semitecolo, Jacobello Alberegno and others, which are to be seen among the primitives in the *Accademia*. The first really important work of the Venetian School is the *Coronation of the Virgin* painted in 1438 by Jacobello del Fiore, an artist still influenced by Byzantine tradition. Venice was apparently still ignorant of the revival of Italian Art accomplished more than a century before by Giotto in the Scrovegni Chapel at Padua. Jacobello del

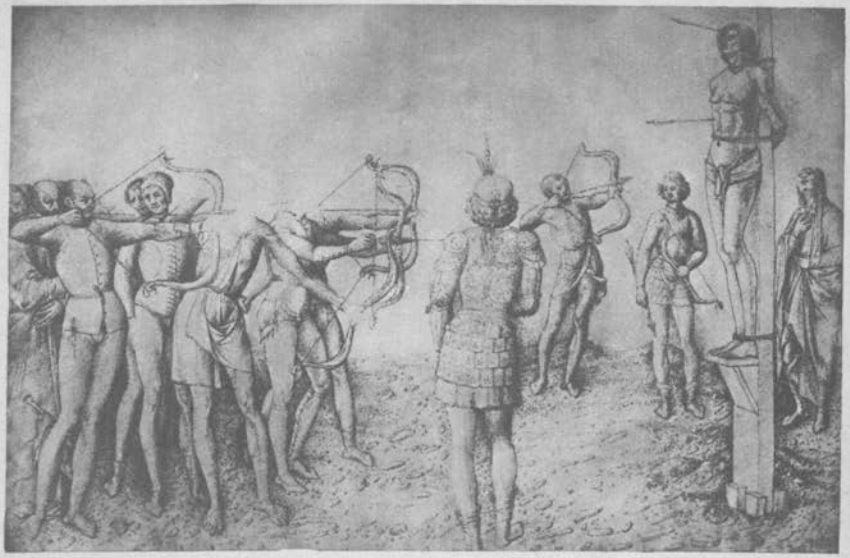
Giovanni Bellini. An Angel from the Madonna Enthroned.

Fiore (painter of the fine *Lion of St. Mark* now in the Doges' Palace), and Michele Giambono, both contributed to the awakening of Venetian painting. Giambono owes his fame chiefly to the mosaics of the Capella dei Masoli in San Marco, but the finest of these mosaics, those remarkable for nobility, frankness and freedom, were really executed by Jacopo Bellini and Mantegna. Beside these masters the work of Giambono seems poor and feeble.

But now we come to two families of great artists, the Vivarini and the Bellini. The Vivarini hailed originally from Murano. Antonio, born about 1415, son of Luigi Vivarini the Elder, left his native island to work in Venice with Giovanni d'Allemagna whose studio soon became famous. Antonio then taught the art of painting to his younger brother Bartolomeo and to his son Alvise. Bartolomeo Vivarini was the first of the Venetian painters to paint in oils (towards 1475).

Giovanni Bellini. Madonna of the Trees.

The founder of the Bellini family is Jacopo (1400-1470) father of Giovanni and Gentile. The glory of the sons has long since obscured that of the father, but that injustice it is now being attempted to repair. Jacopo, taught by Gentile da Fabri-



Giovanni Bellini. A Drawing.

ano, who was, according to Vasari, " like a second father to him " truly merits the title of Founder of the Venetian School. Few of his paintings have come down to our day, but his drawings, preserved in the Louvre and in London, suffice to shew the greatness of his genius.

Giovanni Bellini, taught by his father, rose, in religious painting, to heights to which no one attained after him. His Madonnas, among others those in the *Accademia*, and the Sacristy of the Frari, reveal in the perfection of their beauty the purest mystic feeling. And the inspired pictures of Cima da Conegliano, Andrea Previtale, Bartolomeo Montagna, Benedetto Diana and Vincenzo Catena all breathe a gentle religious serenity while carefully observant of reality. Gentile Bellini (1429?-1501) the elder brother of Giovanni, and Vittorio Carpaccio (born at Venice towards 1453) represent in the same xvth century another tendency in Venetian painting. Those artists sought their inspiration from the fervent joys of the life around them, from Festivals and popular rejoicings, from the splendour of worldly ceremonies as well as from religious themes. If one wishes to understand in what a wonderfully lifelike manner Gentile Bellini painted these gorgeous spectacles, one

Carpaccio. St. George and the Dragon (Detail).

has only to stand before his two great pictures the *Procession in the Piazza San Marco* and the *Miracle of the True Cross*, both in the *Accademia*. His stay in Constantinople by request of Mahomet II (1470) inspires his various Turkish pictures now in the Louvre and at Milan.

Vittorio Carpaccio was also an admirable interpreter of the joy of life which surrounded him. The eight pictures telling the story of St. Ursula *(Accademia)*, those in the Museo Correr and those in the little church of San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, represent the many different aspects of Venetian life.

If one compares Venice with Umbria or Tuscany, one notices that though painting developed late in Venice, it developed rapidly. Giovanni Bellini died in 1516, Carpaccio's last work was painted in 1522. But already Tiziano Vecelli (born in 1489) was at the height of his powers. Tintoretto was already born (1512) and Paolo Veronese was soon to appear (1528). Giorgione (1478-1511) leads the way to these masters; with him we enter the joyous atmosphere of the Renaissance. Of his short life we have unfortunately only the echoes of tradition and of his

genial art there remain only four or five pictures whose authenticity is undoubted. Venice has two of them, a head of Christ in San Rocco and the picture sometimes known as the *Tempest* — but whose real subject is incomprehensible — in the Palazzo Giovanelli.

Giorgione's influence is felt in all the Venetian painters who came after him. For after him artists neither saw nor represented — whatever their subject — anything but great patricians in sumptuous robes, fair and gracious ladies, gorgeous banquets, triumphal fêtes. They sought out the most attractive aspects of life and exalted youthful and material joys. Their untrammeled genius is not overburdened with thought, nothing about them reveals any anxiety as to the interior life, and finally, as goes without saying, they did not trouble themselves about historical

Gentile Bellini. Mahomet II.

Carpaccio. Dream of St. Ursula.

accuracy. The truth they sought to attain was that of colour, reflection, light and shade, bold fore-shortening, transparency of atmosphere, the power of contrast. This love of actuality is striking in their religious paintings where it contradicts Christian sentiment; whether they painted the Christ, Saints or Madonnas, their inspiration remained pagan.

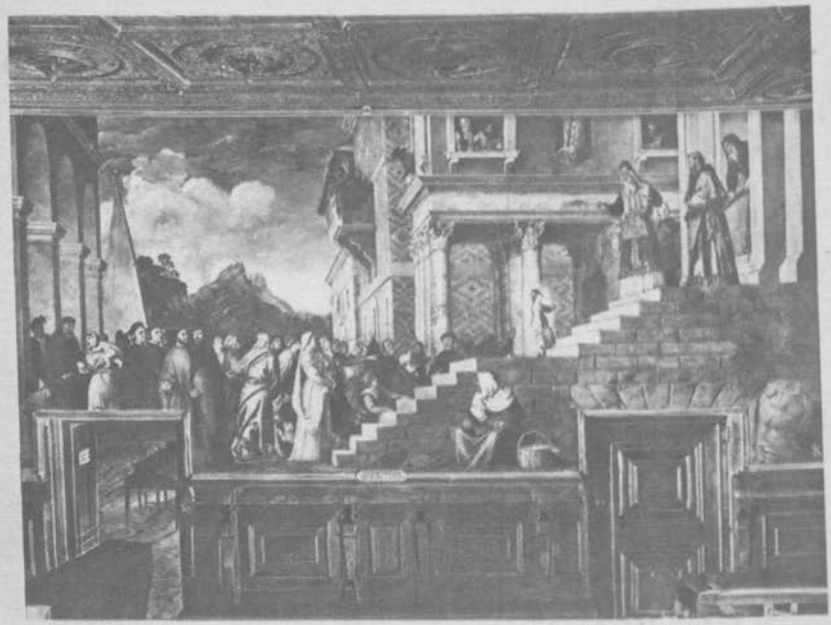
Titian or Tiziano Vecelli came down from his native mountains of Cadore to the lagoons. Robust, full of life, possessed of a rich imagination, he drank deeply of the spirit

Gentile Bellini. The Miracle of the Cross.

of Venice and recompensed her by the profusion of his art. Venice is full of his works. No painter ever displayed more power, more force, more majesty, more magnificence, more exuberant cheerfulness. Titian, as Vasari said, " was the greatest and best imitator of Nature ". Born in 1489 he died nearly a centenarian, in 1576 during an outbreak of plague. In spite of the desolation that lay upon the city, the Republic insisted that Titian should be honoured by solemn funeral rites and he was buried in the church of the Frari. But we seek Titian, not in his coldly academic mausoleum, the homage of a tardy posterity, but at the *Frari* in the works his genius has left us, the *Assumption* and the *Virgin of the Pesaro family*.

Giorgione. The Tempest.

The Assumption, which was painted when Titian was about 30 years old, is full of extraordinary power and feeling. The Virgin, as ethereal as the nude forms which support her, rises, veritably soaring towards the Heavens, above the Apostles who follow her with their eyes and salute her with raised hands. The Virgin of the Pesaro family was painted eight years later than the Assumption and forms a magnificent contrast to it. It is equally powerful but its ardour is restrained and one admires it chiefly for its serenity and repose. Two other pictures by Titian, the

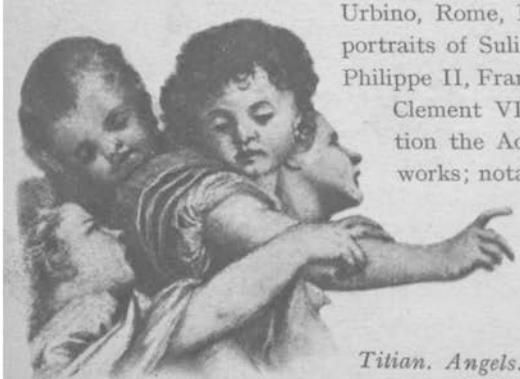


Titian. Presentation of the Virgin.

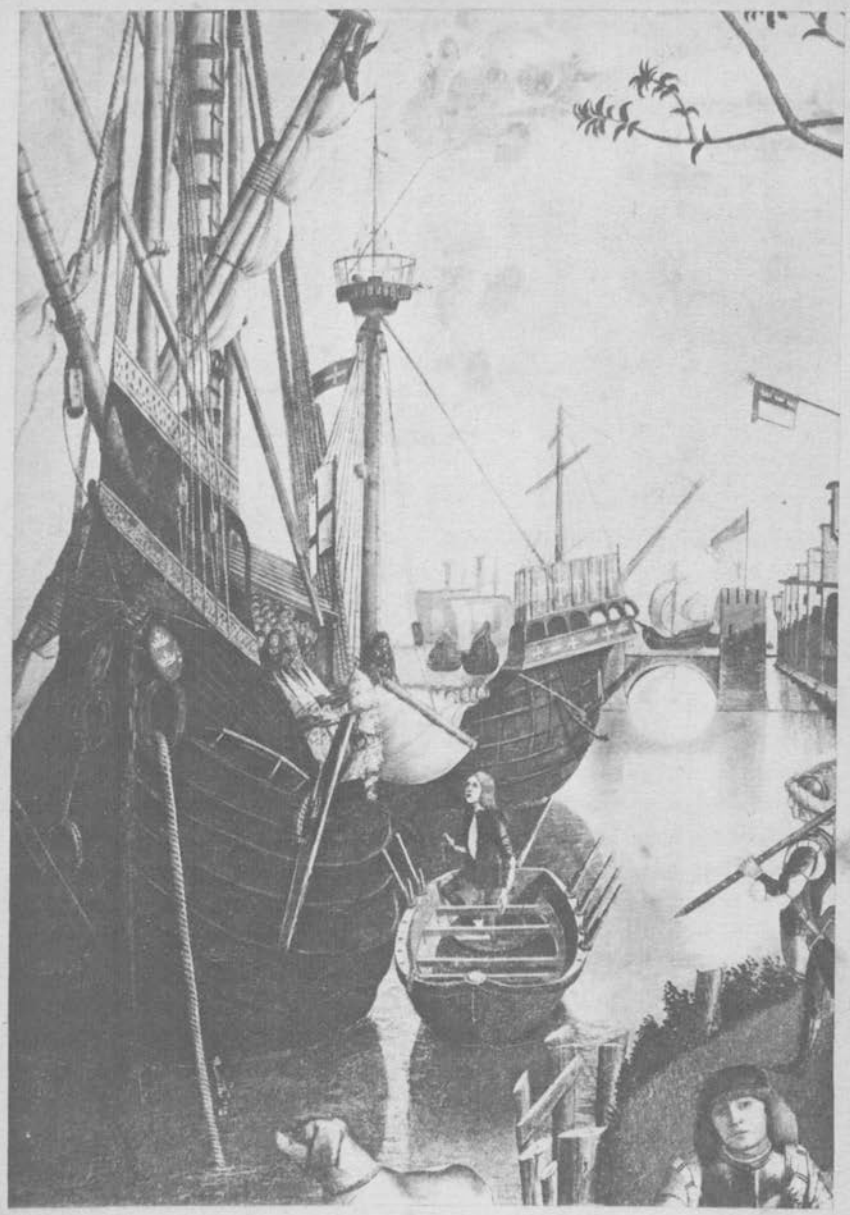
Ascension and the *Presentation in the Temple, (Accademia)* complete the impression gained in the Frari, and finally we may mention the portrait of the *Doge Grimani at the foot of the Cross*, in the Doges' Palace.

Titian travelled widely. He painted for notable people at Padua, Urbino, Rome, Paris and Madrid and painted portraits of Suliman II, Paul III, Charles V, Philippe II, Francis Ist, the Emperor Otho and Clement VII. In addition to the Assumption the Accademia possesses many of his works; notably St. John the Baptist in the Desert, the Visitation, the Deposition and the portrait of Jacopo Lorenzo.

A large group of lesser artists form the retinue of the



Titian. Angels.



Carpaccio. Arrival of St. Ursula at Cologne.

Apollo and Daphne.

great Venetian painters; Bonifazio, Paris Bordone, Fra Sebastiano del Piombo, Rocco Marconi, Schiavone and many others, all of course outclassed by two great artists of the first rank, Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese. Pordenone, Titian's rival painted many frescoes in Churches and Palaces. His masterpiece, the Fisherman and the Doge is in the *Accademia* and in Vienna his celebrated St. Justine. The works of Bonifazio, pupil of Palma Vecchio, will be found in Venice, his finest work being the Dives and Lazarus in the *Accademia*. The most noted work of Sebastiano del Piombo, a pupil of Giorgione, is probably his S. Chrysostom in S. Giovanni Crisostome. Paolo Veronese may almost be called the incarnation of the lyricism and pomp of Venice. For in his works, thought, sentiment and emotion are transposed into forms of marvellous beauty, into an entirely external and material perfection. He had a genius for painting festivals at a time when they represented veritable triumphs. His famous *Supper*, drawn from the Gospel story, is as far as conceivable from simplicity. The artist has thought of nothing but the representation of personages of his own time, dressed in their richest garments, in front of magnificent architectural backgrounds, blended and harmonized with glowing colour. Paolo Cagliari, called Veronese, died at the age of 60 in 1588. He was buried in the church of San Sebastiano for which he had painted *Christ on the Cross*, the *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* and the *Story of Esther*. We may well say of him, that

however rich was the age in which he lived, he was its greatest decorative painter. All his scenes are set in architectural surroundings, where everything is carefully, majestically, and scientifically planned; his fêtes are given in immense palaces and all his work proclaims the ideas of opulence and well-being so characteristic of Venetian life of his time.

The Triumph of Venice is one of his masterly compositions. Here is, Venice calm and lovely and surrounded by noble dames, Peace, Commerce Ceres, Juno and below Cardinals, conquered Turks and the Lion of St. Mark.

In the Church of San Sebastiano where is the tomb of Veronese may be found a veritable Gallery of his works, and so by the dead watch the creations of his genius (1).

Jacopo Robusti, called Tintoretto, was born at Venice in 1512. He was the son of a dyer, hence his surname. Influenced both by Titian and Michelangelo, he revealed a genius of greater depth and emotion than that of many other artists of the Venetian School. In the *Miracle of St. Mark*, also called the *Miracle of the Slave*, which he painted at the age of 36 for the *Scuola di San Marco*, dramatic emotion is combined with an assured technique. This painting is one of the most powerful

Titian. The Virgin of Pesaro.

(1) The works of Veronese now in Venice far outnumber those of Titian. Among the most

works Venice ever produced. Other and often tragic visions poured forth from what Vasari called " this terrible brain ". Many of them are to be found in Venice, in the churches of S. Maria della Salute, San Giorgio Maggiore, San Zaccaria, Scuola di San Rocco, Accademia, Doges' Palace and Madonna del Orto where the artist was buried (1594).

The last important work by Tintoretto is the " Paradise ", which he painted for the Ducal Palace. The Great Council Chamber had been badly damaged by fire and the fresco of Gastiento, which occupied one side of the apartment, had to be replaced. Although he had reached the ripe age of 77, Tintoretto undertook the work for which he made many sketches, one of which is still extant in the Louvre. He worked with great industry on the immense canvas and when the painting was about half finished, it was erected in the Chamber. He then called in his son to help him to finish certain portions after the sketches made by the great master himself. This great canvas is unique with regard to its size but is unfortunately to-day so blackened as to make it difficult to see properly. But when one considers the age of the master, the dimensions of the picture and how splendid must have been its colour originally, it is easy to understand the enthusiasm it evoked at the time.

Important are the *Supper in the House of Levi (Accademia)*, *Glory of Venice*, *Rape of Europa*, *Christ in the Garden of Olives*, *Institution of the Rosary by St Dominic*, *(Doges' Palace)*, *Mystical Marriage of St. Catharine*, (Church of Santa Caterina), not to mention the gorgeous decoration of the Villa Giustinelli at Monte near Treviso.

Veronese. The Supper.

Veronese. The Supper.

His disciples, of whom the most remarkable was his son Domenico (1562-1633), are a long way behind their master. He left them nothing but his marvellous technique. The astonishing rapidity of his work, the result of his tumultuous and surging thought, eager to see the light of day, was, with the facile improvisers who followed him, nothing but a sign of profound confusion and undisciplined feeling. An over-hasty production, a feverish composition, an exaggeration of the movement of figures — such are the faults one notices in the mannerist of the XVIIth century.

The leader of this new School was Jacopo Palma the Younger (1544-1628) whose chief work is the *Last Judgment* in the *Sala dello Scrutino* of the Doges' Palace, but we must not forget his paintings for the Oratorio dei Crociferi. We find at the same period brilliant artists like Andrea Michele called Vicentino (1539-1614), Antonio Vassillacchi, a painter of Greek origin also known under the name of Aliense (1566-1629), Pietro Malombra (1556-1618), Pietro Liberi (1605-1687), and many others who knew how to combine rapid vision with facile, even exuberant imagination and brilliant colouring. Alessandro Varotari called Padovanino (1590-1650), deserves more honourable mention, for one catches in him a last ray of real light, a reflection of the great art of the cinquecento. To sum up, in the first half of the XVIIth century, painting was poor in ideas but rich in imagery; it astonished the eye without moving the heart; incapable of creating reality, it at least knew how to give a pleasing representation of life; it dazzled the eye by the

Ducal Palace. The Great Council Chamber with Tintoretto's Paradise.

rich colouring of a gorgeous autumn. Towards the middle of the century, side by side with this facile mannerism, a new style appeared, a species of decorative painting as cold as it was audacious. Attracted by the splendours of the old school, by the fame of Titian, Veronese and Tintoretto, many foreign as well as Italian painters came to Venice. Rubens himself stayed there in 1600, before proceding to the Court of Mantua. Soon the flood of arrivals became even greater, and towards the end of the XVIIth century, there was a confusion of all sorts of different manners and styles in Venice. Nevertheless, among the most diverse manifestations of genius, the new manner which produced Michael Angelo Amerighi, called Caravaggio, found an echo in every heart. This powerful and original painter had many disciples in Venice. Bernardo Strozzi and Agostino Cassana of Genoa; Pietro Ricchi of Lucca and Federico Cervelli of Milan, formed a group known as the *Tenebrosi*, from the dark and sombre nature of their colouring. They chiefly studied problems of light and shade attempting to make light, airy luminous masses spring from deep and opaque shadows. Attracted by the same problems but with a livelier sense of colour,

Domenico Feti of Rome, Giuseppi Maria Crespi of Bologna, Francesco Maffei of Vicenza and Fra Galgario of Bergamo also stayed in Venice where they propagated their teaching.

Under the influence of these various groups of artists, Venetian painting revived. It began to feel an imperious need of knowledge; its exponents could no longer satisfy themselves with cold academic teaching, they boldly revolted against it and gave themselves to the

Veronese. The Triumph of Venice.

torturing desire of analysis. Among the first to liberate themselves from empty mannerism we may mention Jean Lys, of Oldenburg, who spent nearly all his life in Venice, and the Venetian Gian Antonio Fiumani (1643-1710). The only famous work the latter has left us is the ceiling of the church of San Pantaleone. This great and living composition, representing the apotheosis of the holy martyr, reveals real imaginative power; the whole thing is gorgeous and ostentatious, a throng of people surge about in front of an architectural setting worthy of Veronese.

Two other artists born at the end of the XVIIth century, Piazzetta and Rizzi, belong rather by their works to the XVIIIth. Giovanni Battista Piazzetta, a Venetian of meditative nature, joined the *Tenebrosi*. He did not allow himself to be led away by the magic of colour, but threw all his zeal and passion into expression and modelling, which are seen in admirable vigour in his works, even in his studies of light and shade. The first of his pictures we can date is the *Apotheosis of St. Dominic* which he painted in 1727 when 45 years old for the church of Giovanni e Paolo. Venice has two other pictures from his brush, the *Apparition of the Virgin to St. Philip Neri* (church of the Fava) and a curious picture called the *Soothsayer (Accademia)*. Piazzetta died in 1754. Bastiano Rizzi (born at Belluno

Domenico Tintoretto. The Capture of Zara.

Padovanino. The Marriage at Cana.

in 1660, died at Venice in 1734), seems to have been of a livelier disposition. He travelled all over Europe, studying in the most diverse schools, and attracts us by his culture, his fertile talent, his invention and the richness of his palette.

With Rosalba Carriera (born in 1675), we come at last to the charming art of the XVIIIth century to which Piazzetta and Rizzi led the way. Rosalba was plainly aware of the peculiar elegance of Venice and has left us incomparable pictures of the beautiful ladies of her time. Her pastels, suffused with rosy light, take us back to memories of the past. The Venetian Pietro Longhi, born in 1702, painted all the episodes of the care-free life of his time-festivals, masquerades, balls, café-scenes, carnivals, *ridotti*, and lovers' meetings. His little canvases (such as the *Dancing Master* in the *Accademia*) have a documentary rather than an artistic value.

Antonio Canale known as Canaletto (born in 1697) and Francesco Guardi (born in 1712), have marvellously reproduced the silvery tones of Venetian skies, the greenish waters of the Grand Canal with its reflections of Palaces, gondolas, barges and swiftly moving *macchiette*. Guardi was a better artist than Canaletto, but both are eclipsed by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. The son of a merchant family established on

the lagoon, Tiepolo was born in 1696. The works of his prolific and indefatigable genius are now scattered all over Europe but the most important are to be seen in Venice. From the striking frescoes of the Palazzo Labia to those which decorate the ceiling of the Pietà and the Church of the Gesu, from the *Calvary* of St. Alvise, full of mournful mystery, to the *Communion of St. Lucy* in the Church of the Apostoli, a work full of ecstasy and devotion, all Tiepolo's pictures bear the imprint of genius which knew already how to combine the triumphant strength of the XVIth century with the tenuity and delicacy of an art inclining already towards its decadence. For long the decadence of Venice had been manifest in its political institutions and its mode of life, which daily became more dissolute, but of all this art had as yet only betrayed the beginnings. Like the sun setting over the lagoons, it still dazzled the eyes by the splendour of its final rays.

Rosalba Carriera. A Pastel Portrait.

Art seemed indeed to rejoice and succour the declining powers of Venice. Music found new beauties of power and sweetness. Claudio Monteverdi, Master of Music at San Marco, led the the way in the XVIIth century by the spirit and form of his works, to modern opera. He had for successor Francesco Cavalli, composer of more

than 40 operas of which several were well received in the chief Opera houses of Europe. After him we have Benedetto Mercello one of the geniuses of our civilisation. Music found a favourable atmosphere in Venice. When Charles Burney went there in 1770, he felt as if transported to the home of harmony; violins, guitars and mandolines were heard in the Piazza, serenades resounded over the silence of the Grand Canal. And Jean-Jacques Rousseau exclaimed, when at a Concert in the Conservatoire, "I could never have imagined anything so delightful or so moving".

Tiepolo. Ceiling of the Scalzi Chapel destroyed by the Austrians.

Comedy was born at the same time as Opera. The Gozzi and Carlo Goldoni were its first geniuses. The latter, known in France as the Molière of Italy, was nevertheless a true son of Venice, as indeed he appears in his Memoirs, even although they were written in French after a stay of 25 years in Paris.

But following the glory of the sunset, night fell quickly. The domination of the foreigner extinguished Venetian effort; the plastic arts, more and more given to over-fastidiousness, died away in an atmosphere of academicism, when the coldness of neo-classic art was opposed by the languorous inspiration of romantiscism. One of the most famous masters of this new art in Italy was Francesco Hayez, who had many talented imitators.

But when Venice recovered her political liberty in the new kingdom of Italy, her art revived. The chief artist of this new epoch was Giacomo Favretto who died in 1887 when only 38 years old. At the head of a brillant group of young artists he attempted to regild the ancient glory of Venetian art.

Favretto's influence on Venetian art of to-day is very marked : to him it is we owe the carrying on of the tradition of which the art of Tiepolo was the supreme example, that of the " plein air " colourist, and at the present time there are many Italian and foreign artists in Venice who go there for the express reason of studying the methods of Favretto.

Piazzetta. Ceiling of SS. Giovanni e Paolo.

The Pala d'Oro.

CHAPTER VII

Industrial and Decorative Art

Certain industrial arts came into being with the very beginning of Venetian history. In 846, if we can believe the earliest chronicles, Doge Orso Partecipazio, sent, as a present to the Byzantine Emperor, twelve bronze clocks, and in 999 Doge Orseolo made a gift of a Cathedral carved in ivory, to another Byzantine Emperor. These must have been the work of Byzantine artists who had come to Venice, or else they must have been imported from the Orient like those *Orientalium divitiæ* which, according to the monk of St. Gall, the warriors and courtiers

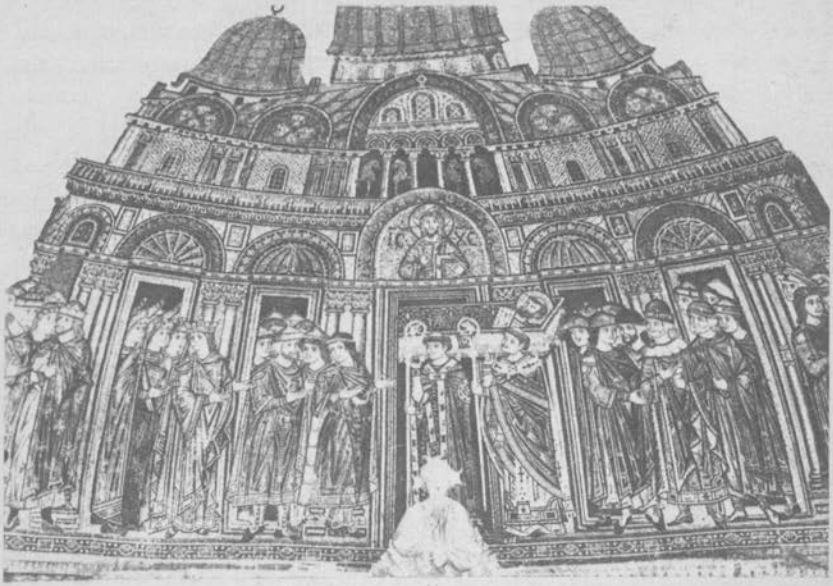
A decorative motif from the Grimani Breviary.

of Charlemagne sent to the Venetians. For, finding a great source of income in the sale of jewellery and enamels, they took their merchandise as far as the west of France and notably to Limoges.

Venice learnt the arts of glass-blowing, ivory carving, cloth and silk weaving, as well as working in gold and silver, from the Greeks. A magnificent example of Byzantine work, which served as a model for the first attempts of the Venetian goldsmiths, is the *Pala d'Oro* of San Marco ordered in Constantinople by the Doge Pietro Orseolo I in 976 and completed in 1105. Its sacred figures, carried out in enamel, are enriched by thousands of pearls, garnets, sapphires, emeralds and rubies.

But Venetian artists did not always confine themselves to imitation of Byzantine models. They did not hesitate to seek inspiration from France and Germany as one can see from the jewellery worn by the great ladies of the early paintings. And at last, in the XVIth century, they began to create more graceful and freer designs, such as we may admire in the binding of the Grimani Breviary, a piece of exquisite workmanship decorated with bosses, plates, ornaments of silver-gilt, and bearing the arms and effigies of Cardinal Domenico Grimani and his

P. Vecchio. A Mosaic in St. Mark's (XVIIth century).



St. Mark's. A XIIIth century Mosaic.

father, the Doge Antonio. This masterpiece of the goldsmith's art is attributed to the Venetian Vittore Gambello. The book which is protected by this sumptuous binding, is itself decorated with Flemish miniatures of the greatest beauty and value.

But the Venetians were not only skilled gold and silversmiths, they understood the art of working in bronze. The three sockets for the flag-staffs in the Piazza are of magnificent workmanship; they are attributed to Alessandro Leopardi, who cast the great equestrian statue of Colleoni. Bronze adapts itself also to those works of lesser dimensions of which beautiful examples abound in Venice, such as the candelabra and medals of Alessandro Vittoria and his pupils. Iron and steel were also worked and apparently to a great extent seeing that two streets are called after the makers of swords and weapons, the *Spadaria* and the *Frezzeria* near San Marco, while the street of the *Corazzieri* near Sant' Antonio is named after the makers of cuirasses.

The Canozzi made themselves a great name as artists in wood-

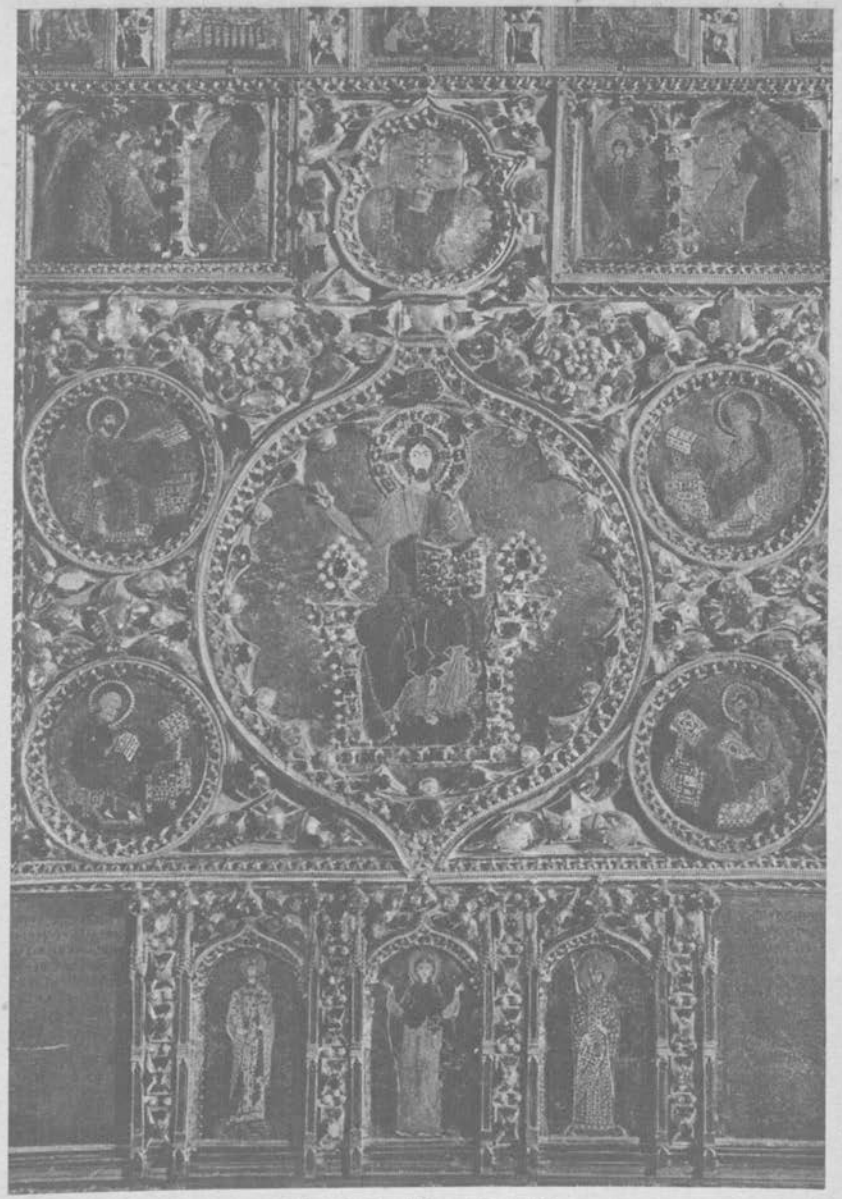
A Reliquary. XVIIth century.

carving and marquetry. On the other hand nothing is known of Gian Pietro da Vicenza who carved the choir of the Frari in 1468, and of many skilled craftsmen not even the names have survived.

Silk-weaving was the monopoly of the Orientals till the XIIth century but after that time French and Italian weavers vied with the Greeks. The industry developed in Venice in the course of the XIVth century when natives of Lucca settled there, their own town being devastated by riot and revolution. From that time Venetian velvet, taffeta and damask were able to compete successfully against the similar products of Florence and Genoa in the famous markets of Champagne and of England. The woollen industry also was in a flourishing state by the end of the XVIth century; it occupied 20.000 workers and the annual output was nearly 28,000 pieces. Those textile industries naturally brought the art of dyeing in their train; Venetian red and crimson were famous. The English sent their stuffs to Venice to be dyed, and in 1532 the Queen of France ordered 300 pieces of variously coloured satin from Venice.

But among all the industries of Venice, those famous over all the world are glass-blowing and lace-making. Two Dogaressas were patrons of the art of lace-making and contributed to its development. Giovanna Dandolo, wife of Pasquale Malipiero, in the XVth century and Morosina Morosini, wife of Marino Grimani in the XVIth. After the death of Morosina in 1613, lace-making was no longer practised in Venice itself. It

Leopardi. A banner holder.



The Pala d'Oro (Detail).

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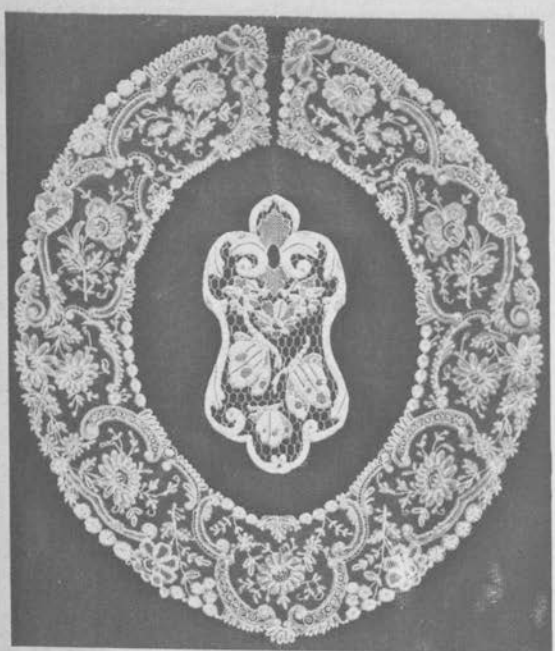


Venetian Lace.

became the speciality of the islands of Burano and Pellestrina. At Burano the women make needle-point lace; at the price of a perpetual sacrifice of eyes and fingers, they create a delicate net-work covered with fairy-like weaving as of captive snow-flowers. The workers of the poor little island of Pellestrina make pillow-lace; their pillows on their knees, the swiftness of their fingers makes their innumerable bobbins fly like lightning. These highly skilled workers know nothing of what happens to the work of their hands; they live, retired from the world, in extreme poverty.

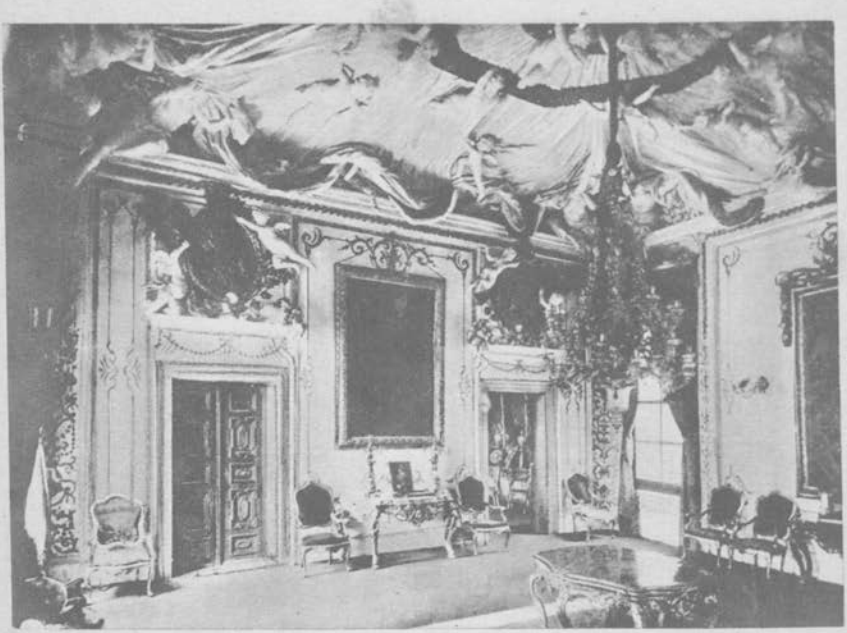
The glass industry also was imported to Venice from

Filet Work. XVIIIth century.

the East. It was already a prosperous industry in the heart of the city when, in 1292, the Government decreed that in order to avoid danger of fire and annoyance from smoke, the glass facotries and furnaces shou'd be removed to the island of Murano. Pearls used to be, and still are, manufactured at Murano. They were formerly much sought after in barbarian lands on the Asiatic and African coasts, where they were used in exchange for indigenous products instead of money. But the crowning glory of the craftsman of Murano is to create by his breath, the most evanescent and lovely glass of countless different forms. The mass of incandescent glass is fixed, on being taken out of the furnace, at the end of an iron tube; the artist blows into this tube and as the mass swells out he models it with a kind of spatula. And so fairy-like creations of extraordinary beauty grow under his breath, chalices, vases, cups, flowers, which on cooling down take on the tints of rubies, emeralds or opals. These lovely rainbow-hued glasses are treasured to-day in every part of the world.

Brustolon. Arm chairs and decorative group.

But in past centuries, man was not content with producing beautiful things; he knew how to beautify his life by their presence. Craftsmen and artists helped each other reciprocally; the great artists who had embellished the city with buildings and statues, did not disdain to enter



Palazzo Albrizzi. Room decorated with Stucco ornaments.

the modest studio of the woodcarver or iron-worker, the carpenter or the goldsmith, forming and refining by their talk, their advice and their example, the aesthetic feeling and taste of the artisan. There was a close bond between all the arts, major and minor; churches, palaces, statues, paintings, furniture, even the most insignificant things, revealed an aspiration after an ideal, inspired equally by pure beauty and a living faith in the ideal. Like the sculptor and the painter, the artisan also helped to complete the work of the architect and proved himself worthy to work alongside of him; the interior of the Venetian Palaces corresponded to the magnificence of their façades. Philippe de Commines, writing in 1495, describes rooms with gilded floors, mantelpieces of coloured marbles, golden bedsteads and exquisite furniture. Some pieces of Venetian furniture were veritable works of art from the happy proportion of their lines, the delicate relief of their carving, sometimes even decorated by paintings of the greatest masters. A Giorgione or an Andrea Schiavone was not ashamed to paint familiar scenes on the coffers destined

for a bride's trousseau. The most ordinary and everyday things, candelabra, bells, inkstands, keys, saltcellars, fire-irons — every household accessory bore the marks of excellent and refined taste. Floors of glistening mosaic called *terazzo* were inlaid with precious fragments of oriental marbles. The walls were covered with leather or costly materials, the door and window frames were carved and inlaid. On beautiful walnut tables would be placed a lavish profusion of gold and silver vases, bowls encrusted with precious stones, carved weapons, medals, seals, manuscripts, miniatures, early printed books, all sorts of marvellous things eloquent of the poetry of the past, bearing witness to an eager pulsing

P. Longhi. The Message.

life, all now alas! dispersed to the four corners of the world or reduced to dust like those who collected them.

What might be called an inventory of the artistic treasures of the city was drawn up in the XVIth century (probably by a patrician called Michiel) and rediscovered and published in 1800 by Jacopo Morelli, librarian of the *Marciana*. It throws a bright light on its period. We read in it for example that Giorgione's picture commonly called the *Tempest* was hung in the Palace of Messere Gabriele Vendramin. We also read of the famous book of Jacopo Bellini's drawings, now in the British Museum. And in the house of Girolamo Marcello at San Tome was the *Venus* which is now one of the crowning glories of the Museum at Dresden.

P. Longhi. A Concert.

At the end of the XVIth century, luxury became even more excessive. In the Doges' Palace we see examples of the style of ceiling and wall decoration of that period; the *Sala del Maggior Consiglio*, was destroyed by fire on September 20th. 1577 and was rebuilt in one year by da Ponte. The former ceiling of gilded caissons was replaced

Vicentino. King Henry III at the Lido.

by one of 29 divisions which were ornamented with paintings by the greatest artists of the day. In the *Sala del Collegio* and that of the *Anticollegio*, the richly ornamented ceilings, the doors with their ornaments and arabesques, the magnificent chimney-pieces — are all the work of Sansovino and Vittoria. With the XVIIth century, ornamentation became even more overloaded and exuberant. On the walls and ceilings, framed by elaborate stucco cornices, we find vast paintings of divinities with overdeveloped muscles, Venuses in voluptuous attitudes. Here and there a few studied portraits look down on us, ladies with powdered wigs, gentlemen full of self-assurance.

But of the richness which enobled so many patrician houses at that time, hardly any traces remain. A fine example of mural decoration in the Venetian style of the end of the XVIIth century is to be found in the Albrizzi Palace. What talent and decorative sense these *stuccatori* must have had, who came most probably from the school of Alessandro Vittoria. There is one great square room which is a real dream of poetry. The stucco ceiling is in the form of a *velarium* supported at the corners by eight colossal figures while in the centre 24 beautiful *putti* in various attitudes, turn, fly, dance, playfully disport and hide themselves. The furnishing is in perfect harmony with the walls; the window frames are inlaid with mosaics of precious stones, the coffers are ornamented with gold and silver, the armoires with ivory and tortoiseshell; there

A Gondola.

are bronze statuettes, beautiful armchairs, loo tables, and wainscotting where the clever chisel of Andrea Brustolon of Belluno (1662-1732) must have been active and where he has lavished the treasures of his imagination on the *intaglia* with a result of wonderful charm.

The somewhat exuberant elegance of the XVIIth century gave way insensibly to the more delicate style of the XVIIIth. Ball and reception rooms still showed the same pomp and grandeur but pretty little unassuming boudoirs came to be arranged alongside these vast salons. The tapestries of the XVIth century had large picturesque designs of vivid colouring and gaudy contrast. These of the XVIIIth century were characterized rather by graceful ornament of delicately undulating lines, festoons and bouquets of flowers in pale pastel shades all of which gave the effect of a sweet and distant harmony. Colour and design were marvellously combined. Charming pictures by Carriera, Longhi, Canaletto and Guardi hung on the walls. The roofs of the alcoves were ornamented with charmingly interwoven garlands. Polished furniture of graceful outline was painted in harmonious colours, white and gold, rose and gold, gold and pistache, but though gold was used extensively, it was never out of place and struck no discordant note.

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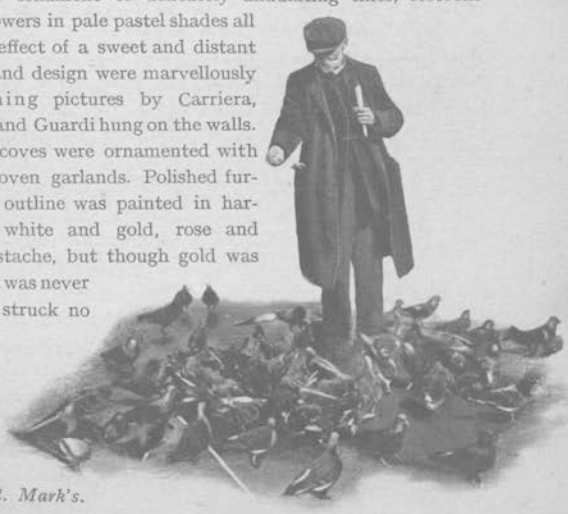
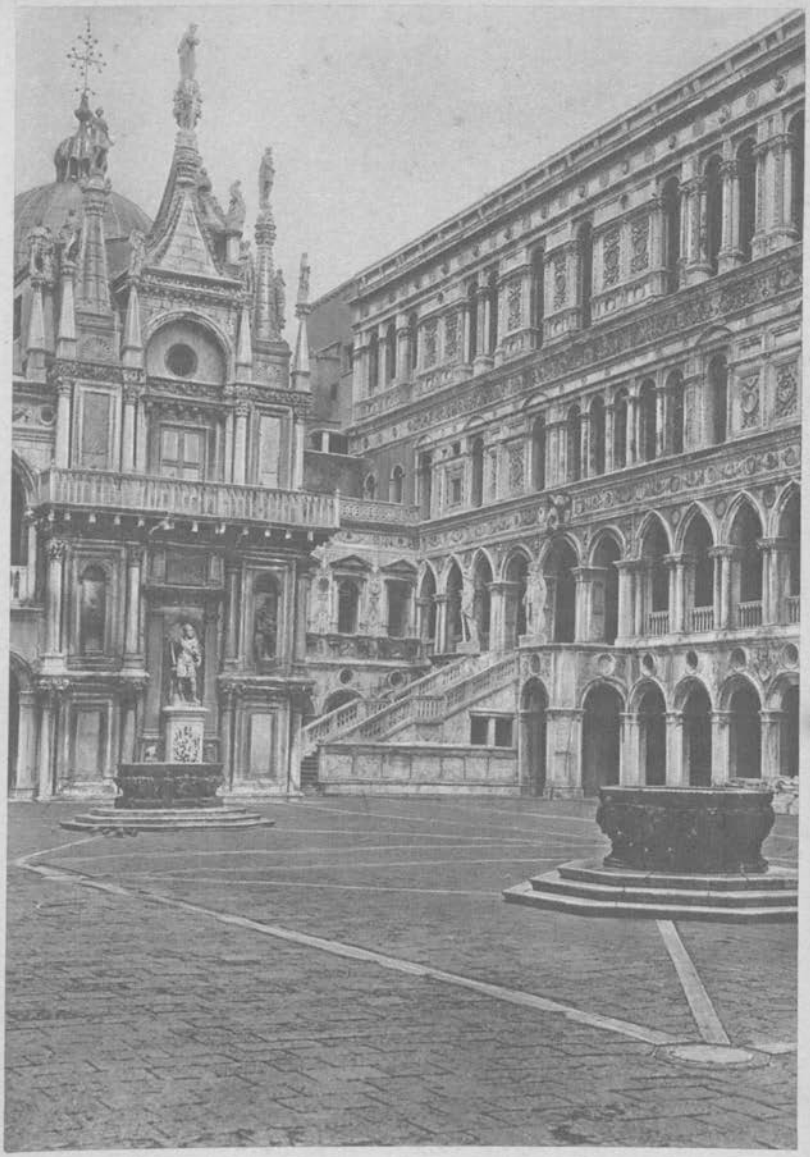
One of the character-



The Pigeons of St. Mark's.



Courtyard of the Ducal Palace.

Courtyard of the School of S. Giovanni (Evangelista).

istics of Venetian art and one of those which contributed most to its glory was the harmonious accord between art and industry. Artists and artisans combined in their efforts, lived for the same end. They owed their opportunities for knowing and liking each other to those corporations of the arts or *Scuole*, whose prosperity in Venice has become legendary. To gather some idea of the wealth of these confraternities it is enough to look at the buildings they erected at the time of the Renaissance. The *Scuola di San Marco*, the work of Pietro Lombardo, Giovanni Buora and Mauro Coducci (1485); the *Scuola di San Rocco*, that imposing mass designed by Bartolomeo Buono of Bergamo and Antonio Scarpagnino, which cost 47 thousand golden ducats; the *Scuola della Misericordia* built by Sansovino, and that of *San Girolamo* by Vittoria.

These confraternities might be compared to large families, for the relations established between their members were marked by the greatest cordiality. At the School of Painters which held its meetings first at San Luca and then at Santa Sophia, the most

The Square of St. Mark's.

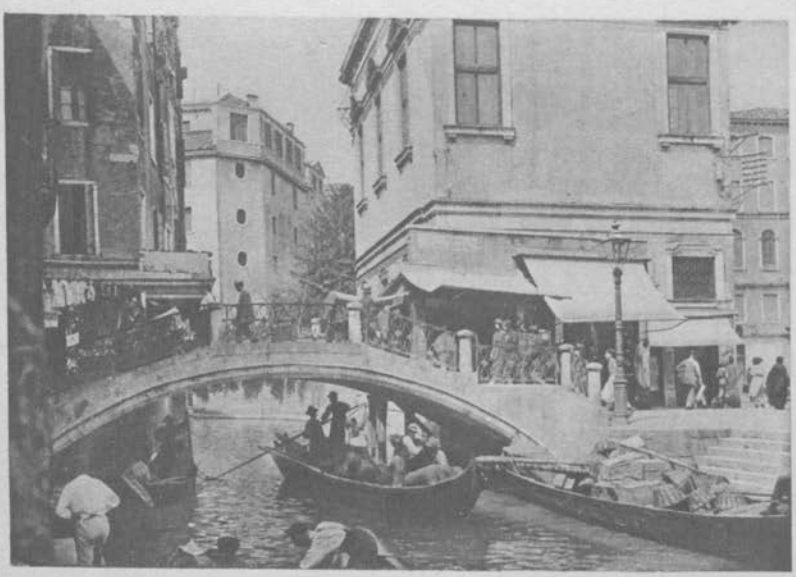
famous artists did not disdain to welcome gilders and papermakers. Vecelli, who signed himself *Tician de Cador depentor* looked on the humble makers of coffers as his colleagues. Those corporations which sprang up and developed in a place where social groups were being formed, acted under the impulse of purely economic interests and kept themselves aloof from any political considerations. But the leaders of the State, in order to conciliate, by their favours, those whom they had deprived of participation in the Government, sought to ameliorate the conditions of the workers, to protect their health, to champion the cause of those whom age rendered unable to resist fatigue. The employment of children under 8 years of age was rigorously forbidden and older children were not allowed to be forced to any work which might injure their health.

View on the Grand Canal.

But now at last, the period of decadence was at hand. Power and wealth, commerce, industry and art all gradually faded away about the same time. Formidable and ever-increasing competition gradually

put an end to the production of manufactured goods; the factories were closed down, new conditions obliged certain corporations to cease work for lack of markets and profits. With the French Revolution a century of poverty dawned for Venice.

Bridge of the Apostles.



A regatta on the Grand Canal.

CHAPTER VIII

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Habits, Customs and Festivals.

The people of Venice, in spite of being a race of clever and practical traders, had nevertheless an innate love of festivals, which they knew so well how to organize that few festivals of other lands could equal those of Venice for pomp and magnificence. In early times the Festivals were of a religious nature; they consisted of sacred ceremonies or processions through the streets and the great Piazza. The Government itself regulated the conduct of such Festivals according to the peculiar setting offered by the city and the lagoons. Civil ceremonies became gradually attached to these religious ceremonies, and were mostly instituted to commemorate the warlike triumphs of the Republic.

The most famous of all Venetian festivals was that of the Ascension which also celebrated the conquests of Pietro Orseolo II in Istria and

Dalmatia. It attained its greatest splendour in 1177, the year in which, thanks to the mediation of the Republic, peace was concluded at Venice between Pope Alexander III and the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. Legend tells us that the Doge, in recognition of his good offices, received a ring from the hand of the Pontiff, that ring which afterwards consecrated the espousals of Venice with the sea and became the symbol of the maritime power of the Venetians. The city seems to have entirely given itself over to boundless rejoicings and on Ascension Day, the Doge, on board the Bucentaur, sailed as far as the Lido, to perform the symbolic rite of union with the sea. Facing the Adriatic, he threw a specially blessed golden ring into the waters with these words *Desponsamus te, mare, in signum veri perpetuique domini.*

The Venetian regattas were originally trials of power and skill. In these boat races the youths of Venice accustomed themselves to ply the oars in the fighting galleys. Before starting, the boats got into line or *riga*, the word from which the expression regatta is doubtless derived. The earliest records of regattas go back to the year 1300 and these simple contests gradually assumed the character of the great event of our time.

Canaletto. The Feast of the Ascension.

A XVIth century Gondola.

At the present day the boats which enter for the regatta start from the Public Gardens laid out by Napoleon, pass down the whole length of the Grand Canal and up again to a floating pavilion anchored between the Foscari and Balbi Palaces, where the prizes are handed over. There are four prizes for every race; the first is a purse of silver hung on the staff of a red flag, the second on a green flag, the third on a blue, the fourth on a yellow flag on which a white pig is painted; the winner of this prize is also presented with a live white pig. The Grand Canal is lined with *bissons*, long gorgeously ornamented boats which carry the judges and the spectators. Regattas are now, as they always have been, the favourite sport of the Venetians.

In the first centuries of the Republic, the valour of the citizens, constantly put to the test by terrible fratricidal battles, was developed by games of skill and courage. Jealousies and rivalries gave ample opportunity for the practice of these virtues. Under the Doge Sebastiano Ziani (1172-1178) the people divided into two parties, the *Nicolotti* who lived beyond the Grand Canal towards the Eastern quarters of Santa Croce, San Paolo and Cannareggio and the *Castellani* established at San Marco and Castello. Passionate contests, both in jest and in earnest, took place between those two parties. In 1292 battles with cudgels between the

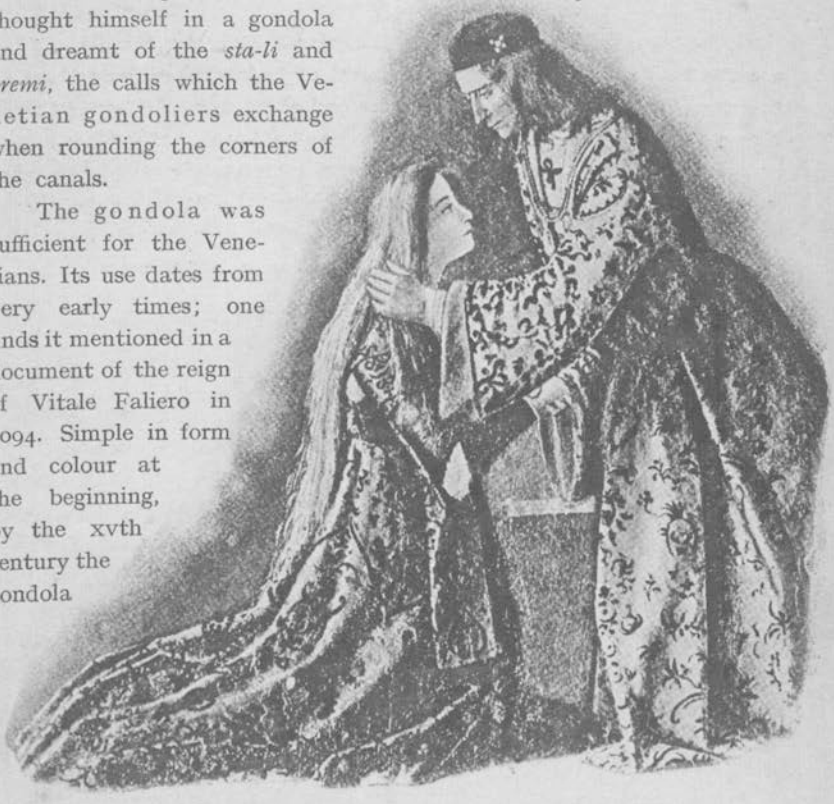
Carlevaris. The Bucentaur in the basin of St. Marks.

enemy populations of Heraclea and Equilio gave rise to contests called *pugni*, a sort of boxing match which took place on a bridge without parapets; many of the contestants, knocked down and unable to rise, fell into the water. There were also sports demanding balance and agility, such as the *forze d'Ercole* which dated from the XIIIth century — pyramids of men in various attitudes. The foundation on which these pyramids were built up, consisted either of a plank laid on barrels, or on boats, according as the sport took place on water or on land. Till the XVIth century, cavalcades (Gualdane) or tourneys were held. No country in the world had a more magnificent arena for its jousts and passages of arms, than the Piazza San Marco. One of the most brillant tourneys ever held at Venice was that of 1364 in honour of the recent conquest of Candia by the Republic. Petrarch was one of the spectators, sitting beside the Doge Lorenzo Celsi on a high balcony erected in front of the Basilica.

But as we have already said, the aspect of the city became gradually transformed; the curved wooden arches gave place to stone bridges with steps; the paved alleys were forbidden to horses shod with iron. In the reign of Michael Steno (1400-1403), there were still Ducal stables where the Royal Gardens now are. But soon after that, horses were no longer to be seen in Venice, none save the four bronze chargers prancing

on the façade of San Marco and the proud bronze steed of the Condottiere Bartolomeo Colleoni. Horsemanship became a lost art to the Venetians. Henri Estienne tells how a Venetian mounted on a restive horse held up his handkerchief like a sail; seeing it fill with the breeze he conclued his horse was right to back, as the wind was contrary — this Venetian thought himself in a gondola and dreamt of the *sta-li* and *premi*, the calls which the Venetian gondoliers exchange when rounding the corners of the canals.

The gondola was sufficient for the Venetians. Its use dates from very early times; one finds it mentioned in a document of the reign of Vitale Faliero in 1094. Simple in form and colour at the beginning, by the xvth century the gondola



Carpaccio. A XVth century Group.

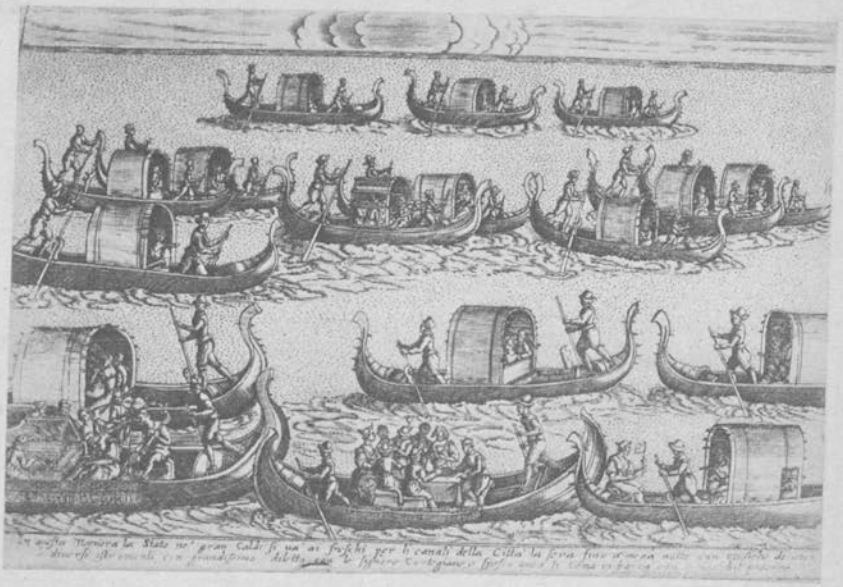
had become a long boat with a wooden cabin amidships. The curved roof of the cabin was covered with coloured stuffs and the vessel had two little rostrums, one at the stern and the other at the prow. By the xviiith century the gondola had become lighter and more graceful; the

rostrum at the stern had disappeared, only the curiously shaped erection in the prow remained, denticulated below and large and flat above like a blade. The cabin or *felze* was covered with black material. No means of transport could have accorded better with the character of the city; the graceful lines of the gondola are inseparable from any picture of Venice.

And the most Venetian feature of Venice — after the gondola itself — are the *traghetti* or stopping-places of the gondola. One finds them in the most frequented parts of the city and chiefly on the Grand Canal. Every *traghetto* is a picture, with its wooden landing-stage, its fragile crooked piles in between which the gondolas glide. Some of them are festooned with vines, others have a shrine with a figure of the Virgin and Child, or a Saint, — but all are the setting of those characteristic scenes in which one hears the true Venetian dialect from the singing lips of her gondoliers.

The painters of the golden age have left us an impression of Venetian luxury as it was at its zenith. We are struck by the gorgeous costumes of the youths in the paintings of Carpaccio. It is necessary, in order to

Traghetto della Madonnetta.



XVIth century Gondolas.

understand this, to know that in the xvth century a number of young patricians formed light-hearted bands which together constituted a League called the *Calza*, because its members wore on their hose a particular device in colour, with gold or silver ornaments as well as pearls and precious stones. The *Calza* contributed much to the elegance of the city

In Coronation ceremonies, in processions of Doges and Dogaressas in the reception of princes and ambassadors of foreign states, the Republic displayed all its magnificence. Of all those princely receptions the most sumptuous and memorable was that of Henry III, King of Poland, called to France to succeed his brother Charles IX. The cortège which followed the King, the galleys covered with cloth of gold, the Senators robed in purple, the barges decorated with silks and tapestries — all these formed a spectacle worthy of the Arabian Nights. As for the apartments of the Palazzo Foscari, which offered hospitality to the King, they were hung with tapestries, curtains of blue and gold cloth, satin

A Member of the Calza.

and velvet woven with fleur-de-lys.

Even in the last two centuries of its existence the city preserved its atmosphere of gaiety and its air of magnificence as if to hide its wounds and weaknesses under a golden mantle. In the welcome it offered to its guests it kept up the open and magnificent hospitality of the past. Private citizens also entertained lavishly to maintain the reputation of Venetian hospitality. In order to receive Gustave III of Sweden in a fitting manner, the Pisani family organised, in their Palazzo di San Stefano and their villa in the Giudecca, two fêtes which cost 18,700 ducats.

But the greatest Venetian Festival, at which the entire populace broke into a delirium of joy, was the Carnival of which one finds record as far back as 1094, in a document of the Doge Faliero. According to some writers, the use of masques dated from the conquest of the Orient; we find mention of it in a law of 1268, which forbade gambling to masked persons. At the time when disguise was fashionable, the desire of hiding the features under the *volto* or mask became so universal, that makers of masks experienced undreamt of prosperity and even constituted a special group in the corporation of painters.

The Carnival of Venice — which exists no longer alas ! save in Paganini's music — reached its greatest glory in

A Member of the Calza.

Chioggia. The Rio.

Fête in the Piazzetta. XVIIth century.

the XVIIIth century. The mask most generally used — the *bauta* — was a cloak of silk and velvet with a hood over which a cap with three horns was worn, the face being covered by a black or white mask of silk or velvet. Every soul, young and old, rich and poor, patrician and pleb, wore a mask. Troops of men dressed in the most gorgeous style drove throught the town singing and dancing on triumphal cars on which symbolic scenes were acted; that was the *mascarade* with Pantalon, King of the Carnival enthroned in the midst of it, in red jerkin and black mantle.

The free and easy atmosphere of Venice was favourable to change. Ancient customs became transformed under the influence of political and domestic alliances, private relations with foreign peoples. In the middle ages even monarchs sought their brides from among the beautiful republicans of the lagoon, as for example the King of Hungary who married Tomasina Morosini in 1290. At his death Tomasina assumed the reins of government with the help of her son Andrea.

But though the Venetian aristocracy could give Queens to Europe, at Venice itself women were excluded from participation in public

affairs. They lived a quiet retired life, only showing themselves at festivals whose splendour they enhanced. The most accomplished woman of that period, affable, gracious, devoid of political ambition, was undoubtedly Caterina Cornaro, wife of Jacques de Lusignan, King of Cyprus. When left a widow she ceded her Kingdom to the Republic and forgot her royal crown in the magnificence of her Castle at Asolo where she lived in a constant succession of gorgeous fêtes and receptions.

While everyday life took on a new character, new refinements were introduced and new fashions appeared; the ephemeral aspect of those changing fashions, have, thanks to the painters, been perpetuated. Feminine dress was not merely an excuse for luxury, only created to flatter the vanity of the wearer, but was regarded as a work of art. The beautiful Venetians with their lovely complexions gowned themselves in gold brocade, velvet embroidered with silver, silk embroidered with flowers; they wore a short corsage ornamented with jewels, bare shoulders with collars and necklaces of gold and precious stones.

The Venetian artists, and particularly Gentile Bellini and Vittorio Carpaccio have left us paintings of the dress of the first Renaissance. Changing fashion and greater wealth of ornament was accentuated in the XVIth century. In every detail of dress, more and more complicated styles and artifices were sought and found. Fashion welcomed extravagances. To give only one example, high boots, which were

Carnival.

Carpaccio. The Ambassador's reception.

formerly necessary in the badly made and muddy streets, became an object of luxury; they were made of brocade, gilded, ornamented with jewels and so fashioned that they might almost have been called stilts.

Another feminine fashion, which has again come into its own in our day, was to dye the hair. All the great ladies of Venice displayed with pride a head of blonde hair which they achieved thanks to the aid of foreign receipts. They dried their hair by exposing it to the sun in covered wooden loggias, called *altane* erected on the roofs of their houses. There they sat, clothed in the lightest of garments, having on their heads, instead of a hat, a wide circle of straw to hold up their hair to the sun ; this was called the *solana*. The beautifying of their bodies was no less a matter of care; though we cannot say that they made excessive use of water, they sprayed themselves plentifully with perfume. Their pale cheeks were touched up with rouge and they also used paint on their necks and chests which they left so audaciously uncovered that even the French spoke of the " espoitrinement à la façon de Venise ".

The strict sumptuary laws which dated from the XIVth century, opposed these excesses of luxury in vain, the laws were evaded in thousands of different ways. Even the men put the pleasures of beauty above

everything else and, led away by the caprice of fashion, gave an example of lawlessness. And this example came even from the heads of the State, who were pleased to live in unmeasured luxury. The most soberminded magistrates thought the pomp of their garments added to the dignity of their office and person. The receptions, balls and banquets held in the Palaces of Venice were absolutely fantastic. Gleaming chandeliers lighted up walls decorated with gold, tapestry, mirrors, and velvet hangings. Such an unbridled tendency to pleasure was bound to produce the germ of corruption. And in fact, before long, the dignified patricians did not reign alone; courtesans appeared in opposition to them and created a sort of aristocracy of beauty, grace and culture. We have a perfect example of this in Veronica Franco (born in 1543), who was truly a Venetian Aspasia. A woman of extraordinary beauty, a gifted poet, a skilful musician, she was loved by Henri III who took a portrait of her by Tintoretto away with him. These courtesans had their painters, their poets and their historians, among whom we may mention Brantôme who praises " the pleasant and care-free life of the courtesan of Venice ".

This moral licence penetrated even into the sacred precincts of the monasteries. Not that the corruption of the convents was graver at Venice than elsewhere, but it was more " elegant ". Girls who had taken the veil by the desire of parents who wished to keep their

Guardi. Reception Room in a convent.

Costume XVIIth century.

patrimony intact for their male heirs, amused themselves by evoking in the solitude of the cloister, the beauties and pleasures of the world. In the secrecy of her cell, the nun received her lover; the *parloirs* were transformed into elegant drawing-rooms where balls and theatricals were held. Marino Sanudo, a far-seeing and faithful chronicler of the XVIth century, gives a vivid and detailed picture of the monastic life of his time. Later on the nuns contented themselves with more innocent amusements; from behind the grille they gave marionette performances.

In spite of inflexible laws which applied to everyone, even to the patricians who ruled the State, this loose morality spread more and more till in the XVIIth century it reached its highest point. At that period of gorgeous display, fashion made for greater richness, but not for greater elegance; stiff, heavy, pompous robes, overloaded with lace, fringes and ornaments, enclosed the bodies of the unfortunate ladies. And the solemnity of etiquette which regulated the whole of the XVIth century, corresponded with this excessive magnificence in dress. The Venetians appeared to St. Didier, a French traveller, as " great, proud and majestic ", but he adds that they seemed " dressed up in their clothes " em-

Costume XVIIth century.

Costume XVIIth century.

barrassed in their demeanour, in their walk, in their mode of greeting.

The men, too, held themselves stiffly, gave themselves bombastic airs of importance. If they did not wear the toga, they wore robes of velvet and damask, wide trousers, shoes with immense bows of ribbon. Beards were gradually given up; the men shaved and wore their hair short. A coiffure not unknown to the Romans and which was again becoming the fashion in France — the wig — became also fashionable in Venice after the patrician Vinciguerra Collalto brought it from Paris in 1655. Towards the end of the century a certain grace crept in and tempered the rigid pomp of dress. One began again, among the men, to see the elegant coat and jerkin of embroidered silk, cuffs with lace frills, white silk stockings, shoes with silver buckles, the short sword and the three-cornered hat.

Costume XVIth century.

Ladies' fashions followed the fashions of France. Every year on Ascension Day, an enormous French doll, dressed according to the latest French fashion, was exhibited in the *Merceria*. The names *zenda* or *cendato* applied to a dress peculiar to Venice; it was made of silk with a thick veil which covered the head and fell in folds to the waist where it was caught in, the two ends floating loosely behind.

Costume XVIIth century.

Venice remained the favourite haunt of foreigners who made long sojourns there. Life was gay and cheerful, full of charm, and provided only that the government was not mentioned, everyone enjoyed the greatest liberty. But while men of mark flocked to Venice, so also did a whole world of petty princelings, bankrupts, gamblers, starving littera-

teurs, questionable ladies and swindlers. Jean Law, the French minister, took refuge there; Baron de Poellnitz (1692-1775) who died at Berlin at the Court of Frederick the Great; Frederick Baltimore who had travelled all over the East and adopted its habits; Count Claude de Bonneval (1745-47) who fled from Turkey where he had become a Mussulman; Ange Goudar, philosopher and politician, spy and swindler, author of various works on Venice, published under his name or that of Sarah Goudar (1).

Italy itself was no less rich in vagabonds seeking their fortune and using violence, craftiness or fraud towards that end. Italy gave the world the consummate type of the modern adventurer, Giacomo Casanova, born at Venice in 1725, son of a comedian called Zanetta. Casanova died at Dux in Bohemia where after many lurid adventures, he had become librarian to Count Waldstein. We may also mention Lorenzo da

(1) This Sarah, who was more or less his lawful wife, was marvellously beautiful; Goudar met her in a tavern in London and carried her off to transform her into a Queen of Beauty.

Chioggia. The Rio

The Piazzetta.

Ponte, born in 1749 at Ceneda of a Jewish family, a *bon viveur* who unfrocked himself to marry a pretty Englishwoman and ended a life of adventure in America. He was a poet not without talent and wrote several *libretti*, among others those of *Don Juan* and *The Marriage of Figaro* of Mozart's. It is a curious fact that nearly all those adventurers felt it necessary to write their memoirs for the edification of their descendants,

Burano. San Martino.

but their biographies have a certain value in their revelation of curious details of the past.

Love and gambling together threw the philtre of corruption into the heart of Venice. While the public fêtes amused the people, the patricians and the rich spent their whole nights at the *Ridotto*, spending at the gaming tables the wealth accumulated by their ancestors. In the salons of the Ridotto (a gaming house opened in 1638 in the old Palazzo Dandolo near San Marco) long tables were laid out; in front of each of them stood a patrician surrounded by piles of golden ducats and ready to play with the first comer, provided he was a patrician or wore a mask. On Nov. 27, 1774, the *Maggior Consiglio* ordered the closing of the Ridotto but games of chance were still played in the *Casini*, pretty little rooms where ladies and their cavaliers met to play and chat, as well as in the *Cafés*, little gaily painted and gilded resorts which sprang up for the use of those who liked to meet for gossip and frivolity.

Nothing could break the immutable course of this life : the first breath of revolutionary trouble coming from the high Alps left the Venetians

apathetic; even the guns of Napoleon thundering at Montenotte, Dego and Millesimo did nothing to arouse the people from their torpor.

The Republic indeed made a feeble effort to abandon the attitude of unarmed neutrality, but soon acquiescing in the outrageous demands of Bonaparte, gave way. Venice became resigned to her lot having no longer any hope save in Providence.

Torcello. S. Fosca.

The Scalzi Church after the bombardment by the Austrians.

The Rialto after the bombardment.

CHAPTER IX

—

Bondage and Liberty

On May 12, 1797, the *Maggior Consiglio*, intimidated by the threats of Bonaparte, signed the death warrant of the Republic. Three days later French soldiers entered the city. After long centuries of independence Venetian soil was trod for the first time by the foot of a conquering foreigner.

A democratic government was set up with a provisional municipality. It lasted only for a short time, for on Oct. 17, at Campo Formio, Bonaparte made peace with Austria, to whom he ceded Venice. The soldiers of Francis II took possession of the unfortunate town on Jan. 18, 1798. Eight years later, Jan. 19, 1806, the French again entered the town,

to be again replaced by the Austrians on April 20, 1814.

Venice, which had known the heights of glory, now knew the depths of despair. Wealth and population were on the wane; a mournful silence reigned on the Piazza and in the deserted streets; buildings fell into disrepair; more than 200 Palaces were demolished because the owners had not paid their taxes. And of the marvellous artistic treasures handed down from past generations, the best and greater part were stolen by the invaders. The Austrian Government, contrary to every standard of justice, suppressed the liberty of the citizens, imposed excessive taxes which hindered economic enterprise, terrorized the population by means, of spies and *sbirri*, " veritable convicts " as Anatole de la Forge said " to whom Austria gave Venice for a swimming-bath ". But when this tyranny and shame reached its height, revolt and insurrection burst out.

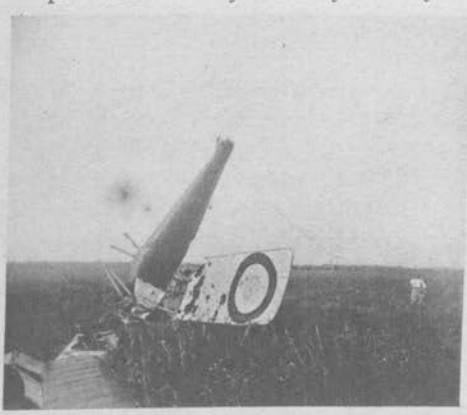
In 1847, the new Pope, Pius IX, called for the blessing of God on Italy which groaned under the yoke of the foreigner : once again Christ became the only hope of the oppressed. Italy awoke and shook herself; Venice, the city of cafés and masquerades, transformed herself into a city capable of offering heroic defence to foreign tyranny. Not without reason had destiny

L. Borro. The Manin Monument.

given the sad mission of burying the old Republic to a Doge of the name of Manin; half a century later, another Manin, who hailed from a Jewish family become Christian, rose up to ravenge the injuries inflicted on his city.

A trench in Upper Venetia.

Daniele Manin, a revolutionary advocate, had the courage to put himself at the head of the people and drive out the Austrians. But only, alas! for a short time. Reinforced by fresh troops they returned to camp on the frontier of the lagoon in order to reduce the city by famine and thus oblige it to surrender. While the revolution which had broken out in other Italian cities was crushed by force, Venice held out as the last rampart of liberty. But the Austrian bombs which set many buildings on fire and took a heavy toll of victims, were aided by famine and famine was joined by another terrible scourge. Cholera broke out in Venice. In one day the number of cases rose to 402. From July 20 to Aug. 22, 23,000 projectiles were fired into the town. When there was no longer enough food for one single day, when the munitions, powder and money necessary to carry on the defence, were exhausted, Manin surrendered. Venice had again to submit to the violence of the invader whom the heroic resistance of the Venetians had made even more ferocious. The hopes of the patriots had to be sadly put from them; nothing now remained but punishment, prison cells, bastinadoes, exile, confiscation of goods, heavy fines. The unfortunate city had



Debris of an aeroplane near Venice.

Transporting a damaged aeroplane by boat.

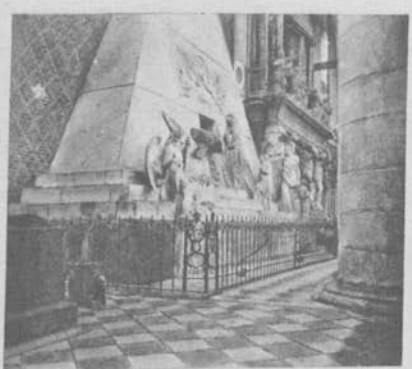
to suffer this slavery for many years before the hour of her release sounded. It was not till Oct. 1866 that Venetia by a practically unanimous plebescite, united herself with the crown of Savoy.

The beneficial effects of this complete restoration immediately made themselves felt in every part of Venetia and were still further augmented when, half-a-century after the liberation of Venice, the world was suddenly swept by a wave of carnage and destruction. As soon as possible, Venice joined France and England, not only willing to obey the duty of fighting against an iniquitous foe, but eager also to win back the unquestionable rights of such purely Italian provinces as the Trentino, Trieste and Istria. Among many reasons for legitimate pride offered us by the Great War, the spectacle of the calm courage of Venice was certainly not the least. The vigilance of the city of the lagoons responded worthily to the vigilance of the soldiers entrenched on the Alps and along the banks of the Piave. Venice lay open to the blows of an enemy who held the mastery of the air. She had no longer either commerce or industry, the sources of her wealth were dried up. But as sentinel of the Adriatic, Venice confronted her martyrdom with intrepid courage. The appearance of enemy aircraft hardly affected the rhythm of her

Transporting a damaged aeroplane by boat.

Ponte di ferro at Saint Simeon near the Railway Station.

life. When these "accursed birds" as the women of Venice laughingly called them, returned to their robbers' lair, having accomplished their cruel task, blood flowed from the boundaries to the heart of the city. The military authorities, confident of the courage of the inhabitants, took active steps to protect their works of art. The most famous buildings disappeared under a scaffolding of wood covered with sandbags. But in spite of these precautions, many churches and palaces were struck by bombs and either damaged or ruined. The number of victims was fortunately, not high. In 28 attacks on the city, enemy aviators threw 736 bombs of which 112 were incendiary bombs. On the night of Feb. 26-27, 1916, during which a German squadron flew over Venice for eight hours, 348 bombs, according



The Canova Monument.

Chioggia. Statue to the Madonna.

to the German official *communiqué*, containing 14,700 kilogrammes of explosives, fell on the city, while 307 more bombs fell on Venetian territory, from Murano to Chioggia.

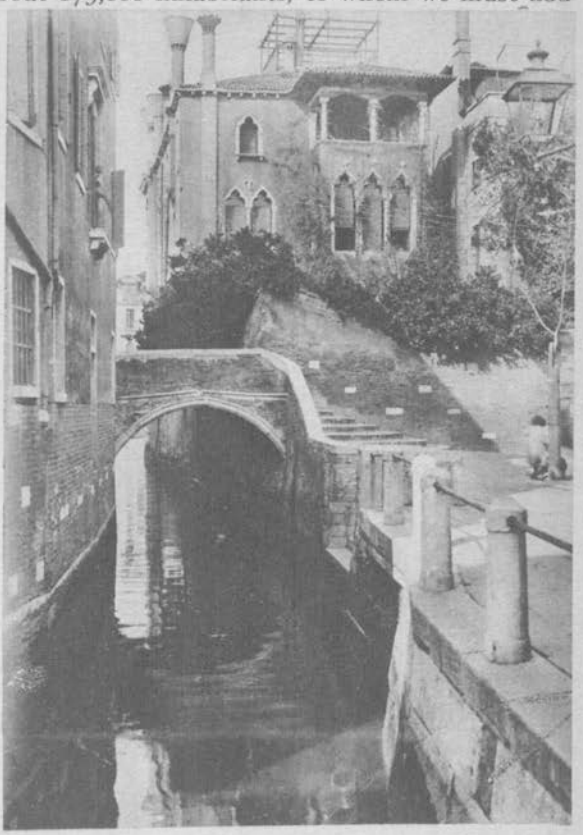
The greatest loss art had to deplore, was the destruction by an Austrian bomb (Oct. 24, 1915) of Tiepolo's marvellous fresco, the *Apotheosis of Santa Teresa* which decorated the ceiling of the Scalzi.

After the triumph of right and justice, Venice felt the joys of victory the more, that she had greatly suffered. Delivered from the nightmare

Snow in Venice.

of invasion, from the continual menace of aerial attack, she began to breathe again. The protective coverings were removed from her buildings and thus freed from her battle-armour, she re-appeared in all her magnificence.

Venice has now about 175,000 inhabitants, to whom we must add those of the communes she has recently annexed, Pellestrina (5300 inhabitants) Burano (9500), Murano (6000), which brings the total population up to nearly 200,000. Industry and commerce have come to life again with new vigour. The streets are as busy, the cafés as frequented as before; the shops are full of goods; a crowd of strangers invades the hotels. The quiet agreeable Venetian people have recovered their spontaneous gaiety, their quick wit. Groups of girls pass along, draped with incomparable grace in their black, long-fringed shawls. When they are beautiful, they are as beautiful as any *grande dame*; their faces bear a stamp of nobility which one is somehow surprised to see in the daughters of the people. For the most part one no longer meets the blonde, opulent, traditional Venetian

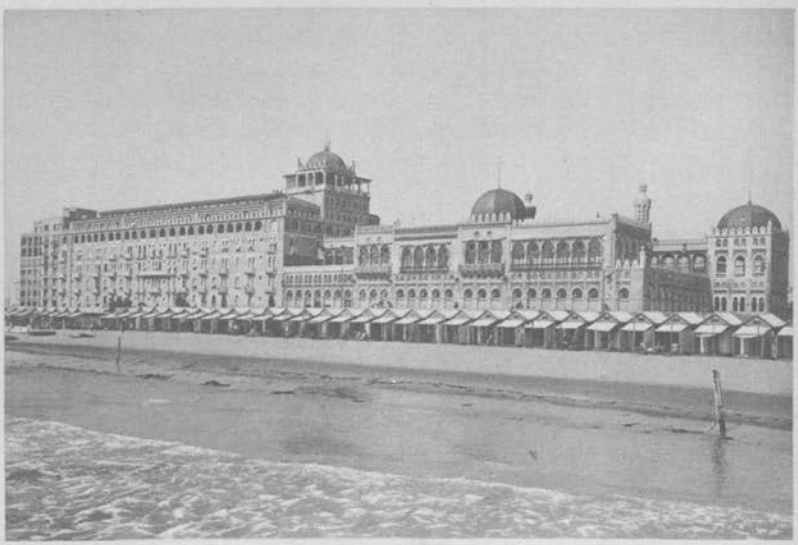


Rio Barbaro.

type; the girls are dark and slender, with bright brown eyes; the line of their profile is perfect. Among the men, on the other hand, the Venetian type one admires in the old masters is better preserved, a distinctly Latin type with boldly carved features, strong jaws, square foreheads, powerful necks and peaceful eyes, which can however dart a keen glance.

The Rialto Bridge.

Just beside Venice, the town of the Lido is growing rapidly from day to day. Its gay season is not now as it used to be, in winter, but like all seaside towns, in summer. The Lido is disfigured by hotels of the worst taste, villas and bathing-boxes which are an eyesore, theatres, concert halls and ball rooms, trams, motors, carriages. The Lido of Byron and de Musset is effaced like a dream beneath all this turmoil, this new and feverish life. And though the poetic desert of former days may only be regretted by self-centred and melancholy snobs, yet the grotesque architecture of certain recent buildings makes one ask oneself why comfort and material well-being can never be compatible with beauty. But our taste is not only offended at the Lido. We may even admit that the Lido might have served as a safety-



The Lido. Hotel Excelsior.

valve to satisfy the bad taste of officialdom and thus have saved Venice from a similar fate. The misfortune is that modernism with its exigencies and profanities does not spare the loveliest city in the world, but is spoiling her beauty and altering her character. For in Venice too, modernity has left its mark, which is only too often contrary to artistic feeling. It was thought good for instance, that Venice, like other modern towns, should have broad streets and means of rapid communication for the sake of commerce. And so our eyes have had to accustom themselves to the black smoke of industry and to accept changes said to be necessary in the interests of hygiene, as if the Vene-

Chioggia. Vigo Bridge.

tians of past centuries had not enjoyed as good health as those of to-day. Of course it would be ridiculous, for historic and aesthetic reasons, to sacrifice conveniences and advantages which appear necessary to-day, or to pretend that Venice must remain stationary while the rest of the world around her is developed and transformed.

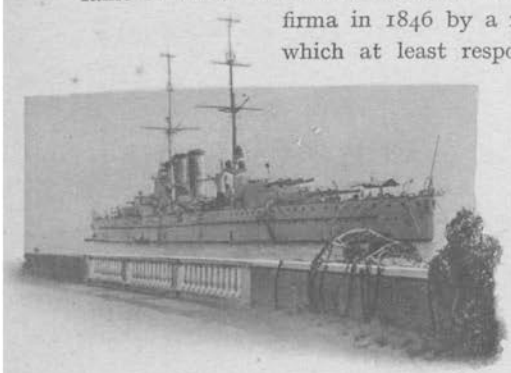
The Basin of St. Mark's.

But crimes are being committed against beauty which profit neither health, nor public convenience, nor industry, nor commerce. Was it really necessary to make streets as wide as the Via Vittorio Emanuele, here where there are neither horses nor carriages? The new streets are certainly very wide but the buildings which have been erected on each side of them are of a monotonous vulgarity which shames their architects. Near the Public Gardens, one's eyes used to be gladdened by the sight of the smiling little green island of Santa Elena, a welcome solitude. It did no one any harm. But the trees on the island have been cut down; it has been enlarged by terraces built over the water and made as ugly as possible; a factory has been set up there which can never prosper.

View on the Grand Canal.

In such ways is the beauty of Venice being destroyed without even profiting industry.

It would be vain to enumerate all the mistakes that have been made in town-planning; the more vain that they seem venial faults compared with the crime which actually threatens the whole character of Venice. This city, which has floated on the waters as buoyantly as any ship, the fame of whose maritime victories is world-wide, was attached to terra-firma in 1846 by a railway bridge. But this bridge which at least responded to new needs, made our innovators jealous and now a road-bridge is being contemplated for tramways, motors, carriages and pedestrians. Such a bridge not only constitutes a danger to the lagoons, whose waters, retarded in their ebb



and flow by new obstacles, would leave exposed a great area of slime and thus invite malaria, but there is also a risk that it would profoundly change the character of Venice. Motors and tramways could not be restricted to the outskirts of the city; in time they would penetrate into its innermost streets and so produce a veritable revolution. In insinuating itself into the very heart of the city, modern life would destroy its age-long character which is both its beauty and its soul; it would give Venice the appearance of an ordinary little town, encumbered and overwhelmed by the inexorable demands of the mainland. And then, farewell to Venice! It would indeed be a pleasure for our descendants to arrive in the Piazza by motor-car, through wide streets; to cross from one shore to the other in electric trams running in subterranean tunnels, to see the gondola replaced by the motor boat! It is argued that the immortal buildings of Venice would still remain and will always be her glory and the delight of her admirers. But they are not the only factors which make Venice the admiration of the world.

The Colleoni Monument and SS. Giovanni e Paolo.

The Doge Gritti.

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